

MOVING THE SACRED COMMUNITIES FROM EXCLUSIVE TO
INCLUSIVE: EFFECTIVELY REACHING THE VICTIMS OF
MARGINALIZATION AND ABANDONMENT

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
May, 2015

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

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ABSTRACT
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The purpose of this project was to elaborate on the mistreatment, and or misunderstandings of women and or their children who do not fit the molds of social and sacred normalcy. Triangulated qualitative data was used for this study. The results of the study prove that the contextual society has become more lenient towards the acceptance of single women and or her children, but the sacred community still hold to its traditions of exclusion towards these women and or their children; causing some to question their relationship with the church and with God. The project design proved to be successful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge those individuals who in some way made the completion of this endeavor possible. First and foremost, it is imperative that I thank the world's greatest mentors, Dr. William H. Curtis and Dr. Gina M. Stewart. These two individuals adamantly empowered my mind and spirituality through their scholastic and ecclesiastical elocution and execution. They afforded me unselfishness of their time, intellectual recourses, and a genuine spirit of caring. I will forever be grateful to both of these powerful personalities, and will wear with great pride the moniker of a Curtis/Stewart Fellow. I do also acknowledge my new family, the entire Curtis/Stewart cohort. Lastly, I want to acknowledge the journalistic juggernaut of Dr. Donnell J. Moore for his compassion towards the pursuit project design and literary excellence.

I would like to further acknowledge the following for their dedicated assistance: Reverend and Mrs. James Campbell, Dr. Barbara Hasty, Reverend and Mrs. Edwin Horsley, Reverend Dr. Leonzo Lynch, Reverend Dr. Trymaine Johnson, Dr. Kim McElroy-Jones, Reverend Dr. Sir Walter Mack, Jr., Dr. Shawn Richmond, Miss Traci Moore, Reverend Cynthia Riddick, Mrs. Patrice Vinson, Miss Jackie White, the project participants, the Calvary Missionary Baptist Church Pastor's Aid Ministry, all who prayed.

DEDICATION

It is my honor to dedicate the culmination of the project and the completion of this doctoral program to my wife, Meshall, my children, Jasmine, Jamia and my grandson, Jerreyl who sacrificed their time and patience with me during this entire effort. I thank God for their love and understanding when I was not understanding. To my parents, Robert and Barbara, who made significant investments in numerous ways towards the completion of this endeavor. Lastly, to those loved ones who are at rest and sleep beneath the tomb; in the memory of my uncle, Melvin W. Scott, and my grandparents, the late Deacon John H. Scott, Sr., and Emma O. Scott, whom I believe are still celebrating their love for me even now. I would trade it all just to have them here now with me.

...If God be for us, who can be against us?

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project was to elaborate on the mistreatment, and or misunderstandings of persons who do not fit in the molds of social and sacred normalcy, primarily, single women and or their children. The ideology that constitutes the framework of this project is based upon data acquired from triangulated investigative assignments. These pieces together form a collaborative focus on an issue that is found in the context and within my life's experiences. A spiritual autobiography, biblical, historical, theological, and theoretical study was done to substantiate this project.

This praxis that has become emotionally, mentally and at times physically, is described as the term marginalization. Marginalization can defined as:

...when society that labels certain people as outside the norm—weird, scary, hateful, or useless—marginalizes those people, edging them out. Native or aboriginal groups often end up in this position, and so do people who are poor, disabled, elderly, or who in other ways are seen as not quite fitting in. The Latin root is *margo*, "edge, brink, or border." Since the late 1920's *marginalize* has referred not to a literal edge, but to a powerless position just outside society.¹

Psychologist shelves this term as a microaggression. Dr. Derald Wing Sue, Professor of Psychology and Education in the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology at

¹Vocabulary.com, s.v. "Marginalize," accessed August 26, 2014, [http:// www. vocabulary.com/ dictionary/ marginalize](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/marginalize).

Teachers College and the School of Social Work, Columbia University, writes in his article in *Psychology Today*,

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.²

As a product of a single mother, even though my mother married my father several months after my birth, we wore the moniker of something abnormal in our contextual setting and among the sacred community. This unfavorable mark has been permanently etched within me. At the time of my early years when I was being stereotyped, I was unaware of what all of this meant. The malicious remarks, often spoken by family members, made me ask myself, “Is there something wrong with me?” It was not until later in years that I realized that these things were being said because of the way that I actually came into being. The era of my conception and birth was doing the early 1960’s. During this time, a woman having a child out of wedlock was considered taboo, and a curse upon her family. Those women who experienced this were looked upon as less, unfit or misfit, whores, and or other detrimental classifications. I’ve often heard stories that when something like this happened, the mother to be would go away for a while, and when she returned, the new edition would be referred to as her sibling and not her child. This was not so with me. I was birthed to a loving mother who endured the criticism from family, church, and the community. She never accepted that her child was

²Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 129.

a “mistake, illegitimate, a bastard,” or any of the other negative terms that were used.

Being so, I have been able to recognize and sympathize with those who were the mark of the marginalized.

One of the threads noticed in this study was how misinterpreted biblical scriptures morphed with social traditions have been one of the biggest contributors to the dismantlement of equality and inclusiveness for the oppressed. The exegesis of multiple biblical scriptures are cited, but the highlighted biblical narratives that support this work come from the Abrahamic narrative of Hagar and her son Ishmael, and the Markan Gospel discourse of the women with the issue of blood. Other factors that will be discussed include literature and music lyrics.

As a pastor, I have witnessed the hurt, guilt, and the shame of those who are composed of a different DNA, who still look like me; those who have been misjudged like me; those who have cried like me; and those whom God has loved and accepted like me. The Reverend Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor, one of the greatest theological thinkers of our time, soothes my doubts and calms my fears about who I am when he said, that each person is endowed with rights that are inherent and with worth that is conferred by God.³

One of the greatest teachers of acceptance of those considered unaccepted was Jesus. He, himself, was considered marginal in regards to his birth, life, non-traditional teachings, and ideology against a dominant culture.⁴ Jesus heard the voices of the outsiders, the poor, ill, religiously excluded, and the politically and socially excluded, and

³Samuel D. Proctor, *Samuel Proctor: My Moral Odyssey* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1989), 149.

⁴John P. Meier, "Introduction," In *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 7-9 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

validated the truth of their experiences.⁵ The biblical teachings of Jesus continue through time. In this postmodern era, new voices also echo the sentiments of the plight of the outsiders. To reach the masses of this generation, one must utilize other methods of communication. Tupac Shakur spoke to this postmodern issue of the single mother through the lyrical masterpiece entitled, *Keep Your Head Up*:

And uhh, I know they like to beat ya down a lot
 When you come around the block brothas clown a lot
 But please don't cry, dry your eyes, never let up
 Forgive but don't forget, girl keep your head up
 And when he tells you you ain't nothin' don't believe him
 And if he can't learn to love you you should leave him
 Cause sista you don't need him
 And I ain't tryin to gash up, I just call em how I see em
 You know it makes me unhappy
 When brothas make babies, and leave a young mother to be a pappy
 And since we all came from a woman
 Got our name from a woman and our game from a woman
 I wonder why we take from our women
 Why we rape our women, do we hate our women?
 I think it's time to kill for our women
 Time to heal our women, be real to our women
 And if we don't we'll have a race of babies
 That will hate the ladies, that make the babies
 And since a man can't make one
 He has no right to tell a woman when and where to create one
 So will the real men get up
 I know you're fed up ladies, but you gotta keep your head up.⁶

The effort of this ministry model is recorded in the following chapters, and this work is intended to educate and hopefully eradicate the harshness of the marginalized and abandoned, with a focus on the contextual church becoming more inclusive rather than exclusive, because exclusiveness defeats the *koinonia* or the true fellowship of the church.

⁵Jane Kopas, "Outsiders in the Gospels: Marginality as a Source of Knowledge," *The Way*, vol. 33, no. 2 (April 1993): 118-9.

⁶Tupac Shakur, *Keep Your Head Up: Strickly For My N.I.G.G.A.Z.*, Interscope Records, 1993.

This project will include the Ministry Focus, which introduces the pivotal pieces of this contextual puzzle. This chapter reveals the events of my spiritual life that contribute to the overall efforts of this project. The other piece of this chapter introduces the contextual focus; its geographical, economical, social, and historical relevancy.

Chapter two is the State of the Art of Ministry Project. This chapter gives the aim of the project by marrying the ideologies of other professionals in the fields of literature, and social science, and from theological practitioners who have investigated the practice of marginalization.

Chapter three, Theoretical Foundation looks through the lens of marginalization from a combination of biblical, theological, and historical perspectives. Biblically, the goal of this analysis is to give foundation to a particular postmodern thought by pericopal exegesis of an Old and a New Testament pericope. The Old Testament pericope is derived from the 16th and 21st chapters of the book of Genesis. It is about a domestic drama of the alienation of an Egyptian bondswoman, Hagar, and her son Ishmael. The New Testament pericope is from Mark 5:25-26 about the woman with an issue of blood. The text deals with a woman who was deemed a social and ecclesiastical misfit because of an uncontrollable physical condition that violated Levitical Law.

Chapter four, Methodology, deals with how a qualitative method of research was formulated to obtain data that would support a hypothesis on the reasoning behind the marginalized treatment of single women and their children in the sacred community. In this chapter, a detailed description will be given about of the tools used for triangulated data collection.

Chapter five is the Field Experience. This is a compilation of the projects aim and its results from that data collected. This chapter takes a piece from all of the prior chapters, detailed data results, and how the context responded to the conclusive ideology of the entire study.

The last chapter, chapter six is the Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion of the overall process. This chapter will indicate how this project changed my way of thinking emotionally and as a pastor. Lastly, the revelation was derived that unfortunately, all minds were not changed, but the efforts did help some and changed others.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The focus of this ministry work is drawn from the premises of the highlights of my spiritual journey interwoven with the strands an analysis of my current context, and a synergized study of the two aforementioned studies.

The major contributors in the shaping of the framework of my spiritual journey are actually the results of life situations. Some of the contributing accounts were a result of certain personalities which tilted in the direction of demeaning and at times emotionally detrimental, but by the grace of God, those persons who, knowingly or unknowingly, conceived or consigned a mechanism to destroy my demeanor were used as a means of self-encouragement. All things in this personal pilgrimage were not doom and gloom. God, in His splendiferous and magnanimous glory, strategically placed persons along this journey who did not diagnose failure but envisioned, encouraged, and prayed for nothing less than a complete lifelong success. This spiritual sojourn was also highlighted with numerous triumphal tides that spawned encouragement of a belief that God, and some people cared. This conglomeration of tragedy and triumph, adversity and advancement, failure and favor, fueled the drive for success.

Towards the latter months of 1964, my mother, a single Black woman, birthed me into this world. During this era, unwed mothers were not very popular in the eyes of the community, the church, and even the family. An unwed mother during this time was a

sign of immoral behavior by what Samuel DeWitt Proctor calls, uncultivated minds.¹

Thank God, I had a mother who disregarded their conceptual ideology, and dare I say, their religiosity, and gave me something that could not be taken away, and that was love. It was not until recently that I was told that even my grandfather was, at least at first shamed by my conception, but for every second of my life until his transition to Heaven's higher ground, he showed and shared his love in the highest degree.

My mother was the oldest child of six. Shortly before my birth, my grandmother lost a baby who would have been her seventh child. I do not know if my birth was a way of healing the wounds caused by this tragic event or not, only God knows. All I know is that my mother's five siblings shared in the shaping of my early moments in this world. They joined my mother and disregarded whatever negative innuendoes anyone perceived.

My father was present during those first few months of my life, and shortly thereafter married my mother. He provided a home for us to live, but we were left alone numerous nights while he continued to follow other outside activities. My father's family did not have the same sentiments towards me as my mother's family did. The attitudes from this side of the family gave me my crash course in marginalization. Because of the way that I was introduced to this world, there were members of my father's family who questioned whether or not I was even the product of my father. Slurring remarks such as "momma's baby, poppa's maybe" and other demeaning comments were often heralded towards my mother and me. On one particular occasion, my mother was told by one of my father's relatives that I would amount to anything but trouble for them. Therefore, during the formative years of my life, I felt like a misfit, unwanted, or not included in what should have been a family circle.

¹Samuel Proctor, *Samuel Proctor: My Moral Odyssey* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1989), 39.

German philosopher Nietzsche said, that which does not kill us, makes us stronger.² This being said, I had to learn to stop listening to negative stereotypical remarks and focus on those remarks or comments which possessed positive and loving tools of strength. It was from these negative and marginalized moments that caused me to vow never to treat anyone this way. What I missed from others, I drew from my mother. I attached myself to her relentless love that never wavered, even during times she suffered in silence in order that my time would be joyful.

As maturity rose like the eastern sun from behind a wall of blackness, I adhered to those prayers and biblical stories that I used to hear my grandmother whisper to herself and talk about. My maternal grandmother, one who epitomized faith and reverence to God, that in the midst of it all, to “Be not dismayed, whatever betide, God will take care of you. Beneath God’s wings of love abide, God will take care of you.”³ I would always appreciate those times when she would pull me aside and pray for me. Those moments reminded me of a text out of the book of James that read, “the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (Jas 5:16 NRSV). With what I have endured and witnessed, my grandmother’s prayers were answered and that God has taken care of me. Concern and prayers kept me while living in southeast Washington D.C. during the early 1970’s where I witnessed people being assaulted, and heard the sounds of bullets from guns of a fleeing criminal pass over my head. During those times, I was picked on and bullied because I was different, I did not conform to the street mentality of many of my peers. Through all

²“Friedrich Nietzsche Quote,” Xplore, accessed September 2, 2014. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/f/friedrichn101616.html>.

³“God Will Take Care of You,” *New National Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville TN: R.H. Boyd Company, 1977), 220.

of that, I know that God cared. With the culmination of continuous childhood and pre-adult events outside of the family, I felt unaccepted by part of my own family.

All that I have endured was not in vain nor was this done as an act of punishment or neglect from God. What I have experienced has been seeded within my spirit, and nourished by what I used to consider, dark moments in my life. It was the negating factors and cruel remarks that nurtured a seed of compassion in me. The anger that I once had towards those whom disregarded me, and tried to stamp me with the mark of failure or illegitimacy, passed away. I recall one Sunday morning while I sat on the last pew in the back of the church, the preacher said to love those who spitefully use you. That statement, at that time sounded oxymoronic. How can you love people who do not love you? In time, I found the answer to that question was that it was only through maturity in God that I could love those who did not love me.

The understanding of loving everyone gravitated me to a more expansive work for the Lord. I could feel the urge of God's beckoning, but because of the scars of rejection and marginalization, I doubted I could do what God was calling me to do. I knew what I wanted to do, but wondered if rejection would raise its ugly head again. This mysterious and yet intriguing moment in my life was another difficult time for me. The question was, how would my family accept me? Or would they accept me? Because all I had gone through, "the spirit of the Lord was upon me, for he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor... to announce release to the captives... to set free the oppressed (Lk 4: 18-20). My faith has become firmly and deeply rooted in the totality of the Lord. According

to Samuel DeWitt Proctor, one should never try to deal with life and its choices without a well-nurtured faith. This is what keeps the conscience alert and responsive.⁴

Time has unfortunately moved former family residents from this space beyond the extension of my arms and out of range of my voice. Some of these were those who continuously echoed sentiments of love, but there were others whom I never heard positive words of acceptances transpire from their lips. I am grateful because to grow, not only do you need the brilliance of sunshine, you also need those clouds of darkness that possess the benefits of rain. Samuel DeWitt Proctor reminded me of this from his book *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, when he penned, “Jesus taught us to see the good in others, and this means loving those who may not want our love, and even loving those who do not seem to be deserved to be loved.”⁵

The pages of my spiritual journey are still being written. Today, I use those things that were once held against me as fuel to help those who resemble my journey and me. I know now, more than ever, that there is one that loves everyone. There is one that sees your value. The great gospel singer, Marvin Sapp recorded a song that simply said, “He saw the best in me, when everyone else around could only see the worst in me.”⁶

This journey has presently stationed me in a context situated in the rural settings of northeastern North Carolina. This area, like many other predominately African American communities of the south, has been grievously affected by a sagging economy. The context within this community, the Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, has stood in

⁴Proctor, *My Moral Odyssey*, 92.

⁵Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 195.

⁶Marvin Sapp, “Best In Me,” *Here I Am*, CD Track 9, Universal, 2010.

existence for over 104 years. In 1910, a small aggregation assembled in the home of its founding fathers, and there a discussion arose on the concept of starting a church for the Negroes who lived in the proximity of the Ahoskie Township in this region of North Carolina. They were aware of the white congregations that were in place, but there was not a Black church nearby. These people found it troublesome making the pilgrimage each Sunday to attend the Negro congregations that were outside of Ahoskie. There was one church that was not too far, but its congregation comprised of light-skinned Negroes. They were the offspring of Negroes who had mixed with the local Indian and white population. They did not want dark-skinned members among their congregation, because many of them could pass for white, and were treated differently by the white local citizens.

Many auxiliaries were founded to aid in the spiritual growth of the church. This maturation undertook not only spiritual growth, but also physical growth. A building fund was established which paved the way for the present church.

I have served this church for the last seventeen years as senior pastor. Over these last seventeen years, many changes have been made, but there are many more that need to be address. I have attempted to eradicate those traditions that have suffocated the breath of the church. Those things such as the place of women in the church, certain family domination, and the most dreadful, the misinterpretation of the Bible. Tradition can be good, but it can also be harmful. For this church, it has been both, but mostly harmful. There was a meeting held one night where I pointed out that a practice that some of the officers were doing was wrong and it was not fair to all of the members. A woman stood up and said that they knew that this practice was wrong but this is the way that the

church has been doing it. There is an ongoing battle that has been steeped by the practices of the past. Some of the years of this pastorate were seemingly a series of issues and conflicts, but the Good News is that God speaks to the issues of conflict.⁷ One positive note is that this church has given me a plethora of sermonic thoughts I bring to the pulpit to enlighten the body every Sunday. I recall the work of Reverend Dr. James Henry Harris, homiletics class at Virginia Union University, and author of, *The Word Made Plain*, quotes one of his former mentors, Reverend Dr. Miles Jones, who often said, “A sermon is a statement of faith, drawn from the context of tradition, projecting the authentic being of the preacher.”⁸ Preaching and your context are related.

Even with the regular educational opportunities that are provided, the ideology of the past is deeply etched into the belief of how the church is supposed to be. For many in this context, their present and futures is solely based upon the golden era of their past. What was taught during this era, for some, is the true foundation of their Christian journey. One strong concept among them is the so-called women’s place in the church. They have an ideology based upon misinterpreted teachings, the masculine dominated writings of the King James biblical interpretation, and improper exegetical understandings of the text. The Pauline writings of the New Testament have played havoc for, in the past, slaves, and also for the misogynistic view of women in the church.

Another factor that has had heavy influence on the transitional growth of the church is based upon the contextual demographics. The context in which Calvary resides is in a region of northeastern North Carolina known as Ahoskie. Ahoskie is one of the

⁷H. Beecher Hicks Jr., *Preaching Through A Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

⁸James Henry Harris, *The Word Made Plain: the Power and Promise of Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004), 38.

larger cities in its county of Herford. Ahoskie is a town that was founded due to the implementation of the railroad. What was once an area occupied by a few American Indians in 1719 grew into a working township for shipping commerce by way of the rail system. As the town grew, former slaves settled in this area because of the work and farming conditions. In recent years Ahoskie's population is made up of over 5000 citizens; 66.6% of the town's population is African-American. The once overwhelming Native American population is now down to 1.3%.⁹

The region of northeastern North Carolina major form of employment is agriculture. There are very few businesses in the Ahoskie area. The largest employers are a local steel factory, a major chicken processing plant, and two prison facilities. Ahoskie is situated about seventy-five miles from Newport News (VA) shipyard. Many of the citizens take a daily trek from Ahoskie to Newport News in order to have a well paying job. Because of the past years poor economy, a large portion of the citizenship is unemployed which stands at 9%. The median household income of Ahoskie is less than \$30,000. There are 25% of the citizens living below the poverty line.¹⁰ These financial woes have spilled into the church. Persons in need of assistance constantly barrage Calvary for help. The church has established a food pantry. It provides food for families in the community who do not have adequate food supplies to feed their families. The church also tries to assist families who struggle to keep their home utilities on. Because of the low income in this area, it is difficult for the church to meet the needs of all who come seeking assistance.

⁹“United States Census Bureau,” accessed October 8, 2012, <http://www.census.gov>.

¹⁰“Snapshot Paints Local Economic Picture,” *Roanoke Chowan News Herald*, March 30, 2011.

In the field of education, there is one high school for the county, and it is located in the township of Ahoskie. The schools' dropout rate is less than 6%, which is less than the state average of 7.1%.¹¹

Today the town is filled with old buildings that once buzzed with business in the height of its existence. Gangs, drug usage and trafficking, prostitution, and a few local businesses that provide goods for the citizens have infiltrated what was once a community of prosperity. One of the most detrimental changes to the Ahoskie area is something that is common in other cities in this country. This problem is the increased sexual activities among young African-Americans. Unprotected and multiple partner sexual activity has sparked a rash of early-aged pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In the area of Ahoskie, there are several African-American churches that acclaim their Sunday morning attendance, but few of them, if any, have established a program to deal with this major issue that now plagues this area. According to statistics, teenage pregnancies are on the rise in this area. Hertford County, at one point, was ranked number three in the state of North Carolina in reported AIDS/HIV cases.¹²

The Ahoskie police department is only made up of six fulltime officers and several part-time and volunteer officers. The police department made a statement that they only had the resources to only maintain a level of order. This department depends heavily on the Hertford County police to assist them with the growing criminal activities. Due to the gang activity and drug sales and usage, a community watch has been established to assist the staff and equipment lacking departments.

¹¹"Hertford County Schools Annual Public Report," CECAS, accessed November 8, 2012, <http://www.ncccas.org/apr2009-2010/apr-460-sy2009-10.html>.

¹²"State Profiles," CDC, accessed October 8, 2012, <http://cdc.gov/nchhstp/>.

Lastly, the situations and circumstances that were present during my birth, childhood, and early adult life are still prevalent today. Being born to an unwed mother, and the ramifications that accompanied this, affected me socially and spiritually. These same issues are now the problems of another generation within this context.

It seems as if the church should be a place that welcomes the disenfranchised, but these people are met with frigid and rigid personalities that may affect these lives presently and possibly into the future. Some of the people in the contextual setting of the writer have deemed unwed mothers and their children to be less than a Christian. Traditionally, they do not address those male figures of the congregation who do not live with any or all of their children. The spotlight of sin resides on the mother and the children. On one occasion, an unwed mother wanted to have her child dedicated to God. A deacon of the church went on a personal campaign to have the dedication stopped because the mother was not married. The question to the deacon of what sin has the child committed, and if none, why should the child be punished by keeping them away from the Lord? These and other views of the context of are, again, attributed to tradition, antiquated attitudes, and improper biblical understanding.

The majority of the lives of his contextual setting are made up of a nontraditional family structure. This structure is made up of an unwed mother, that is either a woman who has never been married or now is separated or divorced, with one or multiple children. Some of these family structures are children (siblings living together) with multiple fathers involved, which propose another issue. The children of these families have little to no contact with their fathers; therefore they seek fatherly attention from others. The mothers, at times, have to maintain the role of both mother and father for

these children. According to an article in a June 2007 issue of Ebony Magazine, an abysmal 80% of African-American children live a portion of their childhood without a father present.¹³

The fathers, on the other hand, are absent in and provide no financial assistance for these children. These men stand on corners, hang out in barber shops, or in some sort of social gathering, bragging on the spreading of their so-called seed, but yet, do not attempt to assist the life that they co-conspired to bring into this world. My father was one that never expressed any kind of open affection towards my brother and me. He personified the stereotypical Black male of that era of the late 60's and early 70's. A father's presence and affection is vital towards the psyche of their children. Throughout history, fathers have supposedly stood as figures of leadership, and held the social title as the head of the house. What was once entrenched as the foundation of the family has been weakened? These children are not trophies or notches making successful sexual escapades, but they are lives that need proper nurturing. The indispensable ingredients of a father is more than just a seed and semen supplier. A real father rightfully accepts his role and does what is necessary to assure the wellbeing of his family. According to David Blankenhorn, in his book, *Fatherless America*, paternal investments enriches children in four ways.

1. It provides them with a father's physical protection
2. It is a mean of provisions

¹³Adrienne Samuels "The New Black Father," *Ebony Magazine*, June 2007, 72-76.

3. It provides parental cultural transmission: a father's distinctive capacity to contribute to the identity, character, and competence of his children
4. Provides day-to-day nurturing¹⁴

While mothers bare and nurture their children with an intrinsic acknowledgement and acceptance of their role, the process of taking on the role of father is often filled with conflict and doubt.¹⁵ The conflict and doubt arises when peers and family members demoralize and act without responsibility and dignity. Their plight is understood because of the resemblance to the life that I had to endure.

In this context, there are several issues that feed the so-called "beast of fatherlessness." Finance plays a major role in the situation of father and children. In many cases, fathers are forced by the judicial system to maintain some sort of financial foundation for their children. It has been heard that some of them say that would rather stay unemployed than to give child support to the mothers of their children. In my context, economic inadequacies serve as an issue as well. The region of northeastern North Carolina major form of employment is agriculture. There are very few businesses in the Ahoskie area. The largest employers are a local steel factory, a major chicken processing plant, and two prison facilities. The context is situated about seventy-five miles from Newport News (VA) shipyard. Many of the citizens take this daily trek from Ahoskie to Newport News in order to have a well paying job. Because of the past years poor economy, a large portion of the citizenship is unemployed which stands at 9%. The median household income of Ahoskie is less than \$30,000 and 25% of the citizens of this

¹⁴David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1995), 25.

¹⁵Cynthia R. Daniels, ed., *Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 35-36.

area live below the poverty line.¹⁶ The economic condition of the contextual setting should not be an excuse for providing for your children.

The economy was an issue that also played part of my past-paternal lacking. During the times of the sixties, there were not a plethora of opportunities for young Blacks in the area of employment. Since the region of my early childhood was based in the southern region of the country, the choices were few. The largest work forces were found either on the farms or the local textile mills. Many, who could, moved away to the larger cities of the north such as Washington D.C. or New York. My father was fortunate to achieve employment at a nearby lumber mill, and my mother worked at one of the textile plants. During the year of 1969, my father lost his job when that mill burned down. The family relocated to the Washington D.C. area. Many relatives had already migrated to the D.C. area because of the well paying job opportunities. The migrated families carried with them a closeness tradition, and most of them lived within close proximity of each other. The move to Washington was a move of necessity, but in time, it became very stressful for my mother. Our new home was an apartment situated at 304 Anacostia Road, in the crime infested southeastern section of Washington. My mother stayed in constant fear for the wellbeing of her children. It was a fear fueled by the news media that broadcasted frequently children that were being abducted in the city.

Life in the nation's capital was short lived. My mother, younger brother, and me moved back to North Carolina; my father remained behind to continue working during the week and traveling to North Carolina each weekend. This weekly commute lasted for several years, and my brother and my dependency on our mother grew immensely. Some

¹⁶“Snapshot Paints Local Economic Picture,” *Roanoke Chowan News Herald*, March 30, 2011.

five years later, my father's job came to an end and he moved back to North Carolina. Having a father in the home everyday seemed awkward.

In this context, some of the children who live without or have very little contact with their fathers have found themselves involved in some illicit and or illegal situations. These children have been noticed to have low self-esteem because of the absence of the man who holds claim to be their father. Then there are those fathers who deny the fact that they are a child's father, but choose to tarnish the mental stability of that child by excluding the acceptance that the child is theirs.

Another contextual issue is that of gang activity, prostitution, drug sales, and usage, and other criminal activities are prevalent in the contextual vicinity. These activities have drawn the attention of some of the older youth. The older youth have reached a point where they are no longer in fear of the mother, and therefore, choose to live without parental oversight.

Education or the lack there of, also plays a major role in the lives of all. Some of the contextual youth, who are affected by fatherlessness experience subpar grades in school. Often times, words of inspiration are given. I quote excerpts one of my heroes, the Civil Rights pioneer, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. One in particular was a speech that Dr. King gave to a Black audience in Philadelphia in 1967, King said, "Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance"¹⁷ It is my assumption that positive motivation will move mountainous issues that these children face. These children need to understand that there is someone who cares, and that there is

¹⁷"Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement: What is Your Life's Blueprint," *Seattle Times*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.seattletimes.com/special/mlk/words/blueprint.html>.

someone who loves. If these children could maintain a positive attitude, maybe they will be motivated to strive to do what is right and avoid the traps and pitfalls that life sometimes bring.

An issue that hovers on the contextual radar has been that some of these children without that permanent father figure living within the home have been the misguidance of sexual knowledge. A mother's latest boyfriend told one young lady, that performing certain sexual acts on men was what she was supposed to do. There was also a young man who began to dress like a female. When he was asked why did he prefer dressing as a female rather than the customary clothing of a male, he replied that he had never lived with a male, nor did a male figure educate him on what he was supposed to wear. In time, it was noticed that the young man attended Sunday service in regular male attire.

Because of my historical background, I chose to be visible in the nurturing of my own children. Not only did I provide the necessities, such as food, clothing, and shelter. I was there at the births of both of my children. I would bathe, change and fed them. It was not an obligation, but an act of love. It was based upon understanding how my life was filled with moments when I felt like a fatherless child; those times of abandonment when family members cruelly labeled me as illegitimate and even a bastard. There were times when I sought after fatherly affection and none could be found. These moments birthed a relationship with God that was endowed with strength and wisdom. I made a promise that if I ever became a father, I would make sure that a day would not pass without my children knowing, unequivocally, that I loved them, articulately and demonstratively.

Through proper understanding of the consequences and concerns of youth without a paternal presence in their lives, present and future children will be spared the degrading

and heart-hurting insults that could negatively affect them. Statistical data records that 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes and 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes. Eighty-five percent of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes. Eighty percent of rapists with anger management issues come from fatherless homes. Seventy-one percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes. Seventy-five percent of all adolescent patients in chemical-abuse centers come from fatherless homes. Eighty-five percent of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes.¹⁸ These statistics are staggering, and the reasoning of a lack of fatherly presence supports this. I am determined to eradicate these statistics by loving, teaching, and caring for those who may have similar sojourn.

By no means am I degrading those mothers who serve and supply dualistically for their children. It is my belief that a permanent male leader in the family aids in the nurturing process of the child. To those mothers of yesteryear, and those who presently maintain a productive life for her and her children deserve the world's attention and applause, because I thank God for my momma. It well known that she unconditionally loved both of her sons. She did not allow cruel acts that were initiated against her child. She stood up against the status quo of the time, her family, and my paternal family. I was labeled with harsh indignations, but she, by her faith in God, and the love for her child overcame it all. In time, that once absent father, became a real father. Today, I am able to gaze upon my son through the eyes of great pride, and not be ashamed to admit that I missed out on some important times in the lives of my brother, and me. Even with all that has conspired in my life, I choose not to hold the remarks and the fatherly void over the

¹⁸Nsenga Burton, "72% of African-American Children Born to Unwed Mothers," *The Root.Com*, November 9, 2010, accessed November 16, 2012, <http://www.theroot.com>.

head of my father. Instead, these obstacles have become springboards to better myself and to become a role model, and if need be, a surrogate father for those within this context.

God has continued to teach me, and certainly remind me, to use my past to promote others future. Just recently, my eldest daughter gave birth to a son. He was born on November 11, 2011. My wife and I, neither my immediate family, nor my daughter knew that she was with child. What was diagnosed as a possible appendicitis, turned out to be my first grandson. The news reminded me of the negative things that were once said and felt about me. This unloving trait would not be past on. When I arrived at the hospital that was over two hours away from our home, my daughter had already given birth. When I saw her, I simply asked her, was she well, and she said that she was. I then asked the nurse how was the baby, and the nurse said that he was perfectly fine. I thanked God, and told my daughter that if she was fine, and the baby was fine, then everything was fine.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The aim of this project was to identify an issue composed of various similarities between my present context of ministry and myself, and from this identified issue, and attempt to construct a ministry model that investigates and identifies methodologies that could possibly assist person who struggle with this issue. The issue identified dealt with moving the local church from behavior exclusiveness to one of inclusiveness as it pertains to victims of marginalization and abandonment. In an effort of gaining an understanding of the method behind the madness, an attempt was made to consult various experts in this field of study. Different means of scholarship were used in this investigation. The venues of study included biblical, historical, theological, the use of the social sciences, and even certain musical genres and literature. This chapter narratively weaves the ideologies and traditions of all obtained information to identify the theories and or conflict in theories between their points of views.

In investigating this issue, several trends were identified that substantiated and also opposed this issue of marginalization. The strongest points of view were from those who had personal connections with marginalization; predominantly women, and from male perspectives that used historical and biblical interpretations as tools in supporting the ideology of exclusiveness.

The social sciences that will contribute to this compilation will include, but are not limited to:

- Sociology – the study of society and social relationships
- Psychology – the study of the mind and behavior
- Anthropology – the study of humankind, past and present

The social sciences will correlate or juxtapose theological doctrines that will include, but are not limited to the study of ecclesiology, which is the doctrine of the church, which manifests its social dimension of faith.¹ The doctrine is Christology, which is the study of who Jesus is and why He makes a difference in humankind destiny.²

Soteriology is the interpretation of the saving work of Jesus.³ Lastly, liberation theology, which is a school of thought that explores the relationship between Christian theology and political activism, particularly in areas of social justice, poverty, and human rights. The main methodology of liberation theology is to do theology (i.e. speak of God) from the viewpoint of the economically poor and oppressed of the human community.

Liberation theology focuses on Jesus as not only Savior, but also as Liberator. Emphasis is placed on those parts of the Bible where Jesus' mission is described in terms of liberation, and as a bringer of justice.⁴

¹Donald W. Musser, Joseph L. Price, *New and Enlarged Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 140.

²Ibid., 92.

³Ibid., 475.

⁴"Liberation Theology," Theopedia, December 10, 2013, accessed December 10, 2013, http://www.theopedia.com/Liberation_theology.

Abandonment is described as life experiences or events that have affected your sense of value and our ability to bond, trust, care for, or love yourself or others.⁵

Marginalization can be defined as the concept of exclusion from mainstream or to the edge society.⁶ Both of these terms deal with mental, or behavioral or psychological characteristics. Wayne Oates reveals that the conditions of alienation and abandonment leave persons affected with a loss of self-worth, and a sense of belonging.⁷

Today's society is filled with a myriad of social, cultural, economical, and sexual differences that it seems as those who are considered the normal become the outcast. Elie Wiesel explains in the August 7, 1991 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*, that the fear of the unknown is the greatest contributor to the evils of marginalization.⁸ The strange thing about this concept is, the definition of normal. It would appear that normal is in the eye of the beholder. Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz unpacks a unique depiction of this social undertaking. He writes:

We live in the state and in society; we belong to a social circle which jostles against its members and is jostled by them; we feel the social pressures from all sides and we react against it with all our might; we experience a restraint to our free activities and we struggle to remove it; we require the services of other people which we cannot do without; we pursue our own interest and struggle for the interest of other social groups, which are also our interest. In short, we move

⁵J. Ray Rice, *Thank You for Loving Me! the Psychology of Abandonment, Healing, and Loving* (Scotts Valley, CA: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2009), 11.

⁶Ursula Hohler, "Marginalization: Exploring the Edge of Conscience Reality," Lecture, IAAP Conference, Montreal Canada, August 2010, accessed October 14, 2013, http://www.ursulahohler.ch/marginalization_canada.pdf.

⁷Wayne Oates, "The Conditions of Alienation and Abandonment," *Review and Expositor*, no. 89 (1992): 321.

⁸Elie Wiesel, "The Foreigner in Each of Us," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 7, 1991, accessed April 4, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1991/0807/07232.html>.

in a world we do not control, but which controls us, which is not directed towards us and adapted to us, but towards which we must direct and adapt ourselves.⁹

Sociology is the science that seeks to measure the limits of chance in human action, or if you will excuse the paradox, it is the science of free will.¹⁰ One of the great contributors to the science of sociology, W. E. B. DuBois, has been one whom, he himself, was marginalized by the sociological fraternity, moreover, the white sociologist only.¹¹ Needless to say, that the marginalization of racism overpowers even the great contributors to science. Historically, the sociological theory on race generally stressed the biological superiority of the white race and the primitiveness of the inferior Blacks racial temperament, which predisposed them towards shiftlessness and sensuality, rendering them basically unassimilable.¹² When certain persons or specific groups are separated from the main actions and societal activities based solely on the premises of difference, or separating the favored from the disfavored,¹³ this undertaking can be described as oppressive exploitation. Some other terms that synonymously pose as actions of marginalization that has been practiced throughout history include the caste system, a system of rigid social stratification characterized by hereditary status, endogamy, and social barriers sanctioned by custom, law, or religion.¹⁴ Another term is ostracism, which

⁹Ludwig Gumplowicz, *Outline of Sociology*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Paine-Whitman, 1963), 6.

¹⁰Reiland Rabaka, *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹²*Ibid.*, 1.

¹³Dan Allman, "The Sociology of Social Inclusion," *SAGE Journal*, January 8, 2013: 2, accessed December 10, 2013, <http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/3/1/2158244012471957.full#ref-61>.

¹⁴*Merriam-Webster*, "Caste," accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caste>.

is defined as the exclusion by general consent from common privileges or social acceptance.¹⁵

One of the most horrific wages of marginalization that is actually socially conflictual is war. War is described as a large-scale social violence with a goal to marginalize the perceived enemy.¹⁶ Marginalization lies at the core of all social conflict issues.¹⁷ Large-scaled marginalization aggression can be attributed to the Holocaust, in which the Hitler regime attempts to annihilate masses of people of other cultures and create a pure German race. Surprisingly, one of the great theologians Martin Luther, who is known as the great ecclesiastical reformer who influenced culture as well as doctrine, but was also a German, was one who spoke in favor of the marginalization or anti-Semitism of the Jews. He spoke harshly against the Jews when they did not convert to Christianity. This mindset would oppose Christological values. Sociology deems this negative treatment as exclusion, and therefore is detrimental for a harmonious and successful society.

In the historical halls of this country, the land taking and mass murders of the Native Americans by the Western Europeans was an act of marginalization. These people were forced from their homes and placed on wall-less prisons called reservations. Slaves were captured in western Africa and brought to this country to be used as cheap labor. They were considered and treated like common animals. These are just only two of the mass groups that have been oppressed and or marginalized by American oppressiveness.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Aditya Anupkumar "Introduction to Sociology: The Concept of Marginalization," Aditya Anupkumar.com, 2013, accessed October 15, 2013,[http://www.adityaanupkumar.com/files /The Concept](http://www.adityaanupkumar.com/files/The%20Concept).

¹⁷Ibid., 3.

Marginalization can affect one individual, a community, or global masses. One example of individual marginalization is the single mothers, who prior to the Welfare Reform of the twentieth century were excluded from participating in this assistance program. In modern society, caring work is devalued and motherhood is seen as a barrier to employment.¹⁸ Persons with physical limitations have been affected by individual marginalization. They have been treated as if they were aliens or monsters because of their differences.

As historical and modern social actions pose as an issue to those that are different, biblically the early church or the ecclesiastical exhibited a high degree of social concern. The church is community of humankind, and should not only in title, but in practice as well. It was the church's focus and aim in caring for the orphans and widows, who were the marginalized of that time. Christologically, Jesus teaches the method of being one another's neighbor, or to exercise concern for the well being of each other. Historically, this country's founding fathers proposed an initial voice of equality in its declarations of human rights, the Declaration of Independence. In the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, Thomas Jefferson generated these words of the statement that says, that all men are created equal. Most students of history agree that the concept of that slogan came from the writings of the English political philosopher John Locke. He wrote a statement that stands against the powers of marginalization.

A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one

¹⁸Iara Lessa, "Discursive Struggles Within Social Welfare: Restaging Teen Motherhood," *Oxford Journals* 36, no. 2 (July 25, 2005): 283-98, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/content/36/2/283.full.pdf+html>.

amongst another without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.¹⁹

According historical facts about this country, that statement is far from the truth. Many lives have been literally destroyed because of marginalized treatment.

In psychology, the science of human behavior deems the actions of marginalization as abusive and oppressive. These oppressors can cause detrimental to the survival of person or persons that they affect by their actions. Oppressors, however, do not need to understand the thoughts, beliefs, or feelings of various marginalized groups to survive. Their actions are not accountable to those without power and they need not understand them to function effectively.²⁰ It is reported that African-American author and poet, Maya Angelou likened these bias and oppressive actions of humiliation to small murders.²¹ Derald Wing Sue notes that the exposure to a lifetime of daily assaults, insults, disregard, and disrespect has been shown to be extremely harmful. The effects may be compared to the perennial slow death by a thousand cuts.²² According to William Bier who writes on reference to the discipline of pastoral psychology, alienation and abandonment deteriorates the human soul and interferes with hope, security, belonging, love, and values and virtues of human integrity and growth.²³

¹⁹John Locke, "Book 2, Chapter 1," in *Two Treatises of Government* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 8, accessed October 14, 2013, http://mongolianmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/two_treatises_of_government-by-Locke-116-pp.pdf.

²⁰Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 129.

²¹*Ibid.*, 66.

²²*Ibid.*

²³William C. Bier, *Alienation: Plight of Modern Man?* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1972), 35-37.

According psychologist, marginalization, and abandonment issue can be detrimental to a person mental as well as physical abilities. Marginalizing initiates painful and traumatizing life-experiences. If self or professional help does not remedy this situation, it could result in horrific outcomes. This situation can cause despair, altered states, serious illness, chronic exhaustion and suicidal state of mind as well as a burning wish for revenge.²⁴ Exhaustion and suicidal state of mind as well as a burning wish for revenge are also possible outcomes for a person who is on the receiving end of this dreadful pedagogy.²⁵

The worsening news is that there is no time limit on how long a person or person may have to deal with this unfortunate treatment. Sometimes, marginalization can be forced upon individuals and groups for a long period of time. What is an even more dismal understanding about marginalization is that some analyst believe that those are marginalized today will probably marginalize others tomorrow.²⁶ These human moral evil impositions that are not a freak of nature, but they are things intentionally done.²⁷

These demeaning actions, by the supposed superior persons or groups, are sometime written off by their defense that they were unaware of any harm that was being done toward another. They often say that their remarks or actions were unintentional or by mistake. Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist states in his psychoanalytical theory

²⁴Hohler, *Marginalization: Exploring the Edge*, 6.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 7.

²⁷Stanton L. Jones & Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: a Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1991), 52.

that there are no accidental behaviors, but all are based on past experiences.²⁸ So what is normal is what a person's past has instilled in them as normal, and all matters outside of that box is abnormal. Reverend Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor calls this inherited way of thinking of gradeuring one's self over another is a crisis. He says that it is a crisis that breeds half- truths, spurious anthropology, historical hearsay, and propaganda.²⁹ When determining what shapes a person's personality, Freud believed that there were three major factors, instinctual needs, rational thinking, and moral standards.³⁰

In the realm of anthropology, which is the study of humankind, past and present? The participants of this social science historically have avoided directly addressing sensitive questions about adverse behavior towards persons of alienation and social exclusion.³¹ History would show that for centuries, different groups treated others who were different as outcast, based upon their interpretation of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, xenophobic, age, and socioeconomic circumstance are some of those ideologies that are on the forefront of the minds of the so-called morally correct. One theologian that could attest personally to the tactics of marginalization would be Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, he describes the torment that he faced during the Nazi regime.³² Bonhoeffer ultimately pays with his life for his relentless defiance of this evil movement. It would

²⁸Peter Fonagy and Mary Target, *Psychoanalytic Theories: Perspective from Developmental Psychopathology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 47.

²⁹Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 171.

³⁰Ronald J. Comer, *Abnormal Psychology*, 7th ed. (New York, NY: Worth Publishers, 2010), 56.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995).

appear that there is the possibility that fear of the unknown may contribute to this ignorance and prejudice.

From a Christological standpoint Jesus placed Himself among those that others considered the least of them. Noted Black liberation theologian, James Cone, in his book *God of the Oppressed*, writes that Jesus of the Bible stands a notion that all have dignity and worth.³³ This book focuses with the plight of the African-Americans in searching and believing in this liberating Divine. In an article entitled, “The Most Segregated Hour in the United States,” mentions Bertrand Comparat, a troubled mind, believes in marginalizing according to race. His rationale is based upon racial hatred. African-American preachers are somewhat on this page as it pertains to gender, age, and homosexuality, so is their hatred too?

The view from a pastoral position should also bring into focus a vantage point from the ecclesiological perch. This is the church, in partiality, the nature, and activities.³⁴ Leonardo Boff, in his book entitled *Faith On The Edge*, expresses the importance of church involvement in the plight of the marginalized. He points out that the essential religious nature of the church is only authentic when it expresses the reality of justice, love characterized by solidarity, and the reality of mercy.³⁵ There are other contributors that question and give hope for the church in its awareness or unawareness of the marginalized and abandoned. Daniel Migliore’s book, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, clarifies Christian theological doctrine. He writes that the church is not

³³James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, Reverend ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

³⁴E. C. Bragg, “Systematic Theology: Ecclesiology” (Lecture, Trinity, FL), accessed October 10, 2013, <http://trinitycollege.edu/assets/files/ECBragg/EcclesiologyR.pdf>.

³⁵Leonardo Boff, *Faith On the Edge: Religion and Marginalized Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Harpercollins, 1989), 5.

perfect, there is a need for reform and renewal, the church is nonetheless the real beginning of God's new and inclusive community of liberated creatures reconciled to God and to each other.³⁶

The arena of marginality is so wide that it takes a plethora of thinkers in a collaborative effort to investigate the entirety of this matter. The spectrum of the church congregants and its community includes sexism, socialism, homophobia, ageism, and cultural and political biases. Bobby Cunningham in his work on pastoral care response to alienation and abandonment says that this plight is an integral part of human condition.³⁷ James Henry Harris, who looks through the lens from a Black church perspective, agrees on the issue and practice of sexism in the church.³⁸ This subject is preached on, but it is sometimes not taught on. Prathia Hall gives a remarkable sermon discourse about the woman who suffered with an issue of blood, that should not only be used as a great sermon, but also as a tool to better the lives that are marginalized due to gender or traditional rationale.³⁹ Elaine Flake in her book, *God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing To Wounded Women*, preaches about the saga the Egyptian bondswoman Hagar and her son Ismael, who were abandoned by one of the biblical patriarchs, Abraham.⁴⁰ Other pastoral

³⁶Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: an Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 249.

³⁷Bobby B. Cunningham, "The Healing Work of Forgiving: A Pastoral Care Response to Alienation and Abandonment," *Review and Expositor* 89 (1992):

³⁸James H. Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black-Church Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 66.

³⁹Cleophus J. LaRue, *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

⁴⁰Elaine M. Flake, *God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Wounded Women* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007).

greats that chimed in on issue of equality include such great minds as Fred Craddock,⁴¹ Graham Johnston,⁴² Michael Quicke,⁴³ and the late great Reverend Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor who teaches how to craft sermons that echo a certain sound to every listener. He uses his life as a lesson in morals. For morality conquers immoral treatment of others. Lastly, he believed that Jesus' life lessons are the models of Christianity. Jesus inspires all to love those who may not want love and loving those who seem not to deserved to be loved.⁴⁴

The correlation between preaching and teaching is essential in regards to eradicating of issues of abandonment of the marginalized especially in this postmodern church. Contrary to a common belief, the church is not an assembly of like-minded people, but it is a conglomeration of unlike people with the commonality of serving the Creator of all people. Pastor and author Andy Stanley writes in his book *Deep and Wide*, that the church should be a place that is purposeful all.⁴⁵ This is very well the concept that was discussed in the article "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the 21st Century." The article discusses a session at the World Councils of Churches on how to better the

⁴¹Fred B Craddock, *Preaching*, Anniversary ed. (St. Louis, MO: Abingdon Press, 2010).

⁴²Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-first-century Listeners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001).

⁴³Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Baker Academic, 2003).

⁴⁴Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: a Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 195.

⁴⁵Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 60.

church in reaching the marginalized.⁴⁶ John Wesley, however, believed that the church to be defined in the action of witness and mission.⁴⁷ Karl Barth's *The Church and the Churches*, speaks of unity among the churches. He speaks about a communal mindset that brings together, and not to tear apart.⁴⁸

In Mike Erre's *Death by Church: Rescuing Jesus from His Followers, Recapturing God's Hope for His People*; he states that for the church to exist as God has proposed it to be it must care for the wellbeing of the community at large. It has to be an institution of social change.⁴⁹ If the church becomes exclusive, it will no longer serve as a relevant entity in society. The attempts of trying avoid the issues caused by it tactics of marginalization, it will fail to hold up one of it pillars of duty... to love unconditionally.⁵⁰

The issue that is at hand is that there are some churches or some within the churches who have decided that only certain people should have access to worshipping and serving God. The question has to be raised again as it was by the late soul crooner Marvin Gaye' song, as he addressed the plight of this nations unpopular activities nationally and globally, what's going on?⁵¹

⁴⁶"Theological Perspectives On Diakonia in 21st Century," Oikoumene, June 06, 2012, accessed July 9, 2013, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/theological-perspectives-on-diakonia-in-21st-century>.

⁴⁷John Wesley, *John Wesley: Library of Protestant Thought* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 1980), 307.

⁴⁸Karl Barth, *The Church and the Churches*, New ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 24.

⁴⁹Mike Erre, *Death by Church: Rescuing Jesus from His Followers, Recapturing God's Hope for His People* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009).

⁵⁰Stanton Jones, "5 Failures in the Church's Treatment of Sexuality and 5 Ways Forward," *DTS Magazine*, September 11, 2012, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www.dts.edu/read/5-failures-on-churchs-treatment-sexuality-5-ways-forward-jones-stanton/>.

⁵¹Al Cleveland, *What's Going On*, performed by Marvin Gaye, Tamla Records, 1971.

Conditions and circumstances that were once silenced in the church have now in this postmodern age emerged, and it is not to be overlooked. For instance, the issue of sexism has been one that has caused countless interruptions in both the social and sacred arena. The underlying contributor to this form of marginalization lies heavily in the misinterpretations of biblical text and a male dominated social system. Paul Tillich, renowned philosopher and theologian, peruses around the subject in his book, *The Dynamics of Faith* says that some doctrines have to be deliteralized.⁵² Kelly Brown Douglas, author and professor of religion, defends this notion in her book, *Sexuality and the Black Church*.⁵³ Douglas also sheds a ray of enlightenment on this behavior in her book, *What's Faith got To Do With It?* She notes that Christians interpret the sufferings of *others* as a way of God dealing with God's enemies.⁵⁴

Women have been, even though the 19th amendment of the constitution have been passed, and are still in many instances under the suppressive acts of marginalized treatments. John Hallagan calls it women's suffrage.⁵⁵ Even literature writes of the unfair treatment of women. Nathaniel Hawthorne, the 19th century American novelist, pens the great novel *The Scarlet Letter*, that highlights the life of a woman who experiences an

⁵²Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2009), xvii.

⁵³Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 11-29.

⁵⁴Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do with It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 46.

⁵⁵John Hallagan, "Women's Suffrage: 140 Years of Struggle," The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, April 1, 2013, accessed April 1, 2013, <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/womens-history/resources/women's-suffrage-140-years-struggle>.

adulterous encounter and after being uncovered has to wear a badge of shame denoting her sins to the public.⁵⁶ A modern author, Alice Walker chimes in on the marginalizing treatment of early 20th century African-American women, in her novel *The Color Purple*.⁵⁷

Women have been treated as slaves, chattel, items of sexual pleasure, and have been the recipient of other inhumane unpleasantries. Throughout biblical history, ancient and modern times, women have felt the vicious blow of marginalization. Along with the Bible's masculine slant, the misinterpretation of biblical text has been a guiding force that supports the alienated treatment of women. Old Testament writers classified the wife as the personal property of the husband, and therefore, she was socially no higher than the servants, and even his animals. The actual composition of the text would also suggest that the original intent of this discourse was meant to be read by male readers. The New Testament has its landmarks of marginalization as well, one pericope in particular is 1st Timothy 2: 8-14. The Apostle Paul speaks about the attire and personal appearance of the woman, and then he delivers a seemingly misogynistic monolog, that a woman is not permitted to have authority over a man and she is to keep silent. The basis of this argument was due to the Genesis narrative indicating that Adam was formed first, and the deception that took place in the Garden of Eden was titled to Eve. Strangely enough, this lesson was being taught to one who was taught at home by his mother and grandmother. These and others biblical text continue to hold some woman in unjust positions in society, church, and home.

⁵⁶Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Boston, MA: Dover Publications, 1994).

⁵⁷Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1992).

Theoretically, there numerous individuals or groups that have to deal with the unfortunate act of marginalization. Though it may not be called by this term, but by other names such as bullying, homophobia, ageism, and classism are just a few. While these oppressive terms may not be frequently mentioned by name; they certainly active in a plethora of social and sacred places. The homosexual community is a group who has faced many of these oppressive acts due to their alternate lifestyle. Homosexuals are called by other various names, such as gay, lesbians, bisexual, transgendered, and transsexual. These are individuals who do not practice normal sexual activities, therefore, they are considered abnormal. As a result of this marginalization, there are persons, who have been beaten, bullied, called vicious names, fired, or refused employment, and worse case scenarios, killed or have committed suicide. They are treated as if they are sexual predators, pedophiles, and or all HIV/AIDS infected.⁵⁸ These accusations and preached propaganda are false juxtaposes the teachings of Jesus. Stanton Jones, professor of psychology and provost of Wheaton College gave a lecture at Dallas Theological Seminary about issues facing the church in the twenty-first century. He noted five failures in the church's treatment of sexuality in regards to the gay and lesbian communities that are bridging an ever-widening gap between the church and a group of people. They are (1) that the evangelical church has failed by treating homosexual persons, gay men and lesbian women, first and foremost as our bitter enemies; (2) the treating persons who identify as gay or lesbian as irredeemable; (3) an embarrassingly deficient representation of the richness of the Christian perspectives on human sexuality; and pastoral care has

⁵⁸Danielle N. Hester, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell' in the Black Church," *New York Times*, March 4, 2013. accessed May 18, 2013 http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/d/don't_ask_dont_tell/index.html.

failed to embrace but rather enticed alienation and have pushed these persons out of the church.⁵⁹

Failure to address these issues which then grudgingly allows airing of nontraditional perspectives. Biased eyes often turn to the biblical witness in support of the bias attitude, particularly when communities attempt to justify their oppression of other human beings.⁶⁰ These biases are often propagated from the pulpit and practiced in the pews.⁶¹ James Henry Harris also agrees that the church has in a way become a catalyst for marginalization.⁶²

The young people of this era were being criticized because of the differences and their refusal to conform to society's definition of normal. Society has for years stereotyped the youth of America because of their fads and lifestyles. Sadly enough it is that those that were once the accused becomes the complainant, and another generation is alienated. The family framework has drastically changed, and now many children lived without fathers in the home. These children seek and need the love and protection of fathers. According to some social thinkers, many of the issues that involve those persons of younger aged are propagated by the fact that there is no father figure within their lives. Some children get involved with illegal and or demeaning activities that make matters worse. It is an issue that has picked up momentum in the negative direction.

⁵⁹Stanton Jones, "5 Failures in the Church's Treatment of Sexuality and 5 Ways Forward," *DTS Magazine*, September 11, 2012, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www.dts.edu/read/5-failures-on-churches-treatment-sexuality-5-ways-forward-jones-stanton/>.

⁶⁰Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: a Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 90.

⁶¹Horace L. Griffin, *Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010).

⁶²James Henry Harris, *The Word Made Plain: the Power and Promise of Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004), 19.

The children that are being birth into this societal change have to deal with issues socially and sacredly. Some in the church add to the issue rather than fixing the issue. The children that are not part of what is deemed normal are often treated differently than those children who live under an acceptable roof. This tendency has made some children feel as if that the church does not want them a part of their ecclesiastical circle. When the doors of this entity are closed or strictly monitored to who can and cannot be a part, the negative issues of society continue to escalate.

One of the most heard of types of marginalization that is spreading rapidly across the country is an oppressive nature called bullying. The issue of bullying is multifaceted and more nuanced than it is often portrayed in the media. The classic bully is often depicted as someone who is a loner, gruff, low achieving, has poor social skills, and comes from a highly dysfunctional family. Similarly, bullying behavior is often characterized as violent, physically assaultive, and overtly intimidating.⁶³

In the light of all of these oppressive and demeaning behavioral acts, there has been a move to illuminate these issues and to help bring some sort of understanding for those involved. One such entity is the movement of liberation theology. This social discipline conveys the ideology of refuting the dehumanization of persons or groups base upon physical or social differences. It also suggests assisting the oppressed in the struggle to obtain full freedom and equality in society.⁶⁴ Fordham University Professor Michael Lee says that liberation theology invites people to respond to the gospel in profoundly

⁶³David Rivera, "Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Bullying: More Than Physical Violence," *Psychology Today*, January 23, 2011, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201101/bullying-microaggressions>.

⁶⁴Jamie T. Phelps, "Communion Ecclesiology and Black Liberation Theology," *Theological Studies* 61 (December 1, 2000): 672-700.

concrete ways, to establish relationships of solidarity and community.⁶⁵ Liberation theology gives direction to those who have and continue to suffer under the oppressive nature of those who have positioned themselves on plateaus of domination. Most who have set up residence in these areas are persons who have been misinformed of first, their so-called superiority, and secondly that persons unlike them are inferior to them. Liberation theology sheds light on the multi-oppressed, and how historically that church's mission included the caring of those who were the least among the community. There, unfortunately has been an increase of oppression, rather than persons moving towards a unified society. Rodney Glen King who was an African-American construction worker who, while on parole for robbery, became nationally known after being beaten by Los Angeles police officers following a high-speed car chase on March 3, 1991, asked a question that became somewhat of a slogan in this country. He asked, "Can we all just get along?"⁶⁶

In all that a person has to do to maintain his or her lives, it is important that to know that everyone should treat each other fairly without any forms or methods of discrimination due to differences of ideas, lifestyles, or any physical characteristics. The social must become social, and the sacred needs to maintain its sacredness by being an agent of inclusiveness and not exclusiveness.

⁶⁵Michael Lee, "Do You Hear the Cry of the Poor?," *U. S. Catholic*, March 2010, 18-21.

⁶⁶"danieljbmitche11," L. A. Riots of 1992: Rodney King speaks; 08:57, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgiR04ey7-M>.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This work of this chapter comprises of the investigation of the subject of tactics of marginalization from a biblical, theological, and historical lenses. Each section involves foundational studies that reveal the reasoning of the existence of this issue.

Biblical

Biblically, the goal of this analysis is to give foundation to a particular postmodern thought by pericopal exegesis. Two pericopes have been selected from both the Old Testament and New Testament to substantiate the similarities of the subject matter that deals with the sacred attitudes regarding the alienation of the marginalized in the postmodern generation. The focal point of this investigation is to uncover a biblical premise that may attribute to, or deny reasons of truth that may pertain to this matter.

The Old Testament pericope is derived a narrative out of the 16th and 21st chapters of the book of Genesis. It is about a domestic drama of the alienation of an Egyptian bondswoman, Hagar, and her son Ishmael. According to David C. Stancil, in his article “The Uncherished Child: A Modern Wilderness of the Heart,” the story of Ishmael introduces a child who had the misfortune of being the most unwelcome and uncherished child in the patriarchal narratives.¹

¹David Stancil, *Ministry to Children and Youth: The Uncherished Child: A Modern Wilderness of the Heart* (Louisville KY: Review & Expositor, 1994), 393-400.

The pericope reads,

So, after Abraham had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarah, Abraham's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abraham as a wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac."²

This incident happened thousands of years ago, during the third dynasty of Ur, and the 12th Egyptian dynasty. The main characters that occupy the threads of the text include Abraham, the patriarch of God's own people. He was referred to as the friend of God. Abraham is referred to as a Hebrew, possibly because he was descended from Eber or possibly because he came from the other side of the Euphrates River. Through Abraham's life, God revealed a program of election and covenant, which culminated in the work of the Messiah Jesus Christ. God said to Abraham, "in you all the families of earth shall be blessed."³ Abraham's principal wife and also half-sister, Sarah, whose name means princess, has a significant role in this investigation.⁴ She was barren and her decisions invoked a premier plot in the text. The other major role went to Hagar, an Egyptian bondservant in Abraham's household, handmaid to Sarah and mother of Abraham's first son Ishmael.⁵

²Gn 16:3-4 & 21:9-10.

³W. A. Elwell & B. J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988).

⁴K. A. Kitchen, "Sarah," D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman, eds. *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press 1996).

⁵*Ibid.*, Hagar.

The accounts of the narrative comes from two sources: Yahwistic, Genesis 16, and the Elohist, Genesis 21. Both chapters are remnants of the same story, or perhaps deal with two separate situations.⁶ The scene of narrative unfolds at the time that the Old Testament patriarch, Abraham and his wife Sarah contemplated the idea of giving birth to a child.

To properly exegete the 21st chapter narrative, the account from the portions of preceding chapters of the book of Genesis must be brought forth. These pericopes serve as the canvas that supports the focused text found in the 21st chapter.

According to the context of the text, Sarah was unable throughout her life to birth a child. She was supposedly now over the age of child bearing, and she believed the conceiving and giving birth was far beyond her physical means. Abraham was near the age of eighty-five and his wife Sarah was about seventy-five years of age. As it was in ancient Hebrew custom, that a woman would be considered cursed if she was unable to conceive and give birth to a child. Bringing forth a child was a sign of divine favor.

Abraham was divinely informed that that his descendants would be recipients of an inheritance of great proportions. This covenant agreement assured that Abraham would be blessed with a male child. As times past, and the promise of God has not yet come into fruition, Abraham and Sarah decided to improvise that planned promise of God. Sarah's impatience causes her to react in a manner of testifying that God did not deliver as promised. She blamed God for her barrenness by saying that God had prevented her from bringing forth a child. In the Hebrew translation of the text, Sarah says, "Yahweh hath shut me up." This is also evidence that Abraham and Sarah repeating

⁶John Skinner, "Genesis," *International Critical Commentary* (London, Edinburgh: T & T Clark Publishers, Ltd., 1980), 285.

“Eden’s” sin of doubting the word of the Lord.⁷ Sarah suggested to her husband Abraham to have intercourse with Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant. John Calvin puts it in this wise:

Therefore, while contemplating the promise, she becomes forgetful of her own right, and thinks of nothing but the bringing forth of children to Abram. For however laudable was Sarai’s wish, as regards the end, or the scope to which it tended; nevertheless, in the pursuit of it, she was guilty of no light sin, by impatiently departing from the word of God, for the purpose of enjoying the effect of that word. While she reflects upon her own barrenness and old age, she begins to despair of offspring, unless Abram should have children from some other quarter; in this there is already some fault. Yet, however desperate the affair might be, still she ought not to have attempted anything at variance with the will of God and the legitimate order of nature. Sarai perverts the law of marriage, by defiling the conjugal bed, which was appointed only for two persons. Nor was even Abram free from fault, in following the foolish and preposterous counsel of his wife. Therefore, as the precipitancy of Sarai was culpable, so the facility with which Abram yielded to her wish was worthy of reprehension. The faith of both of them was defective; not indeed with regard to the substance of the promise, but with regard to the method in which they proceeded; since they hastened to acquire the offspring which was to be expected from God, without observing the legitimate ordinance of God. But it seems that Sarai had something further in view; for she not only wished that Abram should become a father, but would fain acquire to herself maternal rights and honors.⁸

Hagar, whose name means stranger, was a servant acquired by Abraham and Sarah. During this time, women of high regards, such as Sarah, possessed their own personal maids. The duties of these maids were to execute all of their owner’s demands. According to the Hebrew custom, Hagar’s duties were to look after her mistress, perform domestic work, and if necessary, serve as wet nurse for the children of her mistress. Abraham was a patriarchal nomad that probably acquired this female slave, Hagar as he migrated in the region of Egypt. Servants of this era carried different titles that

⁷K. A. Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 1A-1B, *Genesis* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996-2005), 178.

⁸J. Calvin & J. King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: 2010), 423-424.

represented their duties. There was the Hebrew term *abuddah*, which was understood to be a person's piece of property or a slave. There was a *sifhah*, which is translated as a maidservant, and the other was *amah*, which carried a sexual inclination to that of a concubine.

Israel was a patriarchal society, and therefore women occupied low places of regards in it. Sarah's initial thought was that Hagar could serve as a surrogate to bring forth a son who could be counted as Sarah's own, a practice that was culturally accepted during this time. The custom was that a wife unable to bear a child could provide a servant woman to take her place in sexual relations with her husband and produce a child for her.⁹ The child would be claimed and forthwith adopted by the wife and the husband as their own child. The key promise in this patriarchal narrative, according to the 15th chapter is the birth of a son. God speaks to Abraham and says this his son shall be his heir. No great nation or land could exist without the first descendent.¹⁰ After the couple imposed an agreement, the Genesis writer says that Sarah gave her maid to her husband Abraham as an *ishshah* or wife. In the term of the wife or *ishshah* in this context denotes a woman of lower status or a concubine. This idea was accepted by both Abraham and Sarah, but as Naomi Steinberg an associate professor of religious studies at DePaul University argues that Hagar, the slave, was never asked to consent to bearing a child, therefore introduces the act of exploiting the marginalized.¹¹

⁹Stancil, *Ministry to Children and Youth*, 394.

¹⁰Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 110-118.

¹¹Julia M. Klein, "Why Scholars Just Can't Stop Talking About Sarah and Hagar," *U.S. News and World Report*, January 25, 2008, accessed August 29, 2013, http://www.usnews.com/news/religion/articles/2008/01/25/why-scholars-just-cant-stop-talking-about-sarah-and-hagar_print.html.

In time this couple's selected suggestion migrated into attitudes of conflict. In the 16th chapter of Genesis, after Abraham had intercourse with Hagar, she conceived his seed. According to the narrative Hagar's attitude of her status changes and conflict arises between Sarah, the wife *issah* and Hagar the *ishshah*. At this juncture, polygamy produces a degree of envy from Sarah towards Hagar. Sarah is not pleased with the arrogant attitude that her handmaiden is exemplifying. She feels as if this surrogate has forgotten her place as subordinate, and feels as if she may think she is equal to the role of the wife because of her pregnancy. Hagar exacerbates Sarah's precarious position as a barren wife in a patriarchal culture.¹² According to the comprehensive set of Babylonian law codes, called the Hammurabi Code, a penalty could be imposed on slaves who, on becoming concubines, try to gain equal status with the legal wife.¹³ Sarah has the prestigious role of the wife too, but Hagar is subordinate to Sarah and hence under her authority.¹⁴ As a result of the conflict, Hagar flees from and Sarah. Sarah blames Abraham for this matter, and he responds by giving her the authority to act upon Hagar in whatever means that she deems necessary. According to Hebraic custom, Abraham really had no jurisdiction over Hagar directly.¹⁵ As a result of Sarah's harsh treatment towards the now pregnant Hagar, she flees from the confines of her master and mistress.

¹²Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 39.

¹³L. W. King, "Exploring Ancient Cultures: Readings From The Ancient Near East; Hammurabi's Code of Laws," EAWC Anthology: Hammurabi Code of Laws, www.eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/hammurabi.htm.

¹⁴Matthews, *The New American Commentary*, 184.

¹⁵Susan Haber, "A Woman's Touch: Feminist Encounters with the Hemorrhaging Woman in Mark 5.24-34," *Journal For The Study Of The New Testament* 26, no. 2 (December 1, 2003): 171-92.

Apparently, Hagar lives up to the meaning of her name and estranges herself from Abraham and Sarah, attempts to return home, because the text indicates that she is now somewhere in the wilderness near the region of Shur, a considerable distance from the home of her masters. According to Aramaic translation suggest that the meaning of Shur as a well, and not that of a spring. Shur, now Dschifar, is the northwestern part of the desert of Arabia, bordering upon Egypt. A waste stretch of land, of five or six days' journey, lying between Palestine and Egypt. Her location was thus upon the old, worn path, leading from Hebron by Beersheba to Egypt.¹⁶ While in the wilderness, she experiences a theophany, a visible manifestation to humankind of God. This is unusual because Hagar's religious background was not that Abraham.

The writer of the narrative suggests that Hagar exemplified some form of recognition towards this angelic messenger, and subliminally indicating that Yahweh overwhelms the ignorance of His deity. At the beginning of the conversation with the angel, Hagar did not know to whom she was talking. The angel apparently looked like a common man who had stopped for a drink. But she took special notice when the visitor addressed her as servant of Sarah. She had to have thought, "How does he know who I am?"

By the end of the conversation, Hagar recognized the presence of God and affirmed, that God is the God who sees her. Her reply showed she was aware that God is the all-seeing God. And she recognized that God saw her in the moment of deepest distress and gave her hope when all her hope had vanished. She then named the well Beer

¹⁶J. P. Lange, P. Schaff, T. Lewis, & A. Gosman, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 416.

Lahai Roi, which means, “The well of the living One who sees me.”¹⁷ An angelic messenger informs her that she would have a son and that his name would be called Ishmael, which is interpreted God hears or perhaps, “May God hear.” In time of this text, the names of the children carried meaning more than that of a personal identity. They were named according to an event that pertained to their birth. Therefore, Ishmael’s name is symbolic of the promise to Hagar. The text does not reveal that this angelic messenger does anything to alter the minds of Abraham or Sarah, but the revelation of the future overshadows the harshness of the present. Hagar is promised that her offspring would multiply greatly. Hagar is therefore instructed to return to her position with Sarah. The angel told Hagar of the benefits that would result from her obedience.¹⁸ Hagar returned to the home place of Abraham and Sarah, where she submitted to her mistress, and did give birth to a son that she named Ishmael. Hagar’s satisfaction with the future of her son was a sign of her humiliation.¹⁹

According to the 18th chapter of Genesis, Abraham received a visit from three men and he respectfully addresses one of the three men who evidently stood out from among the others, as indicated by the singular my lord *āḏônāy*.²⁰ While in a tent meeting, one of the men questioned Abraham of the whereabouts of his wife Sarah. The messenger tells Abraham that he was coming back in a certain season and that his advanced in age and now barren wife Sarah, would give birth to a son. Sarah, who was in

¹⁷W. G. Williams, *Genesis: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999), 141.

¹⁸Ibid., 141.

¹⁹Lange, Schaff, Lewis, Gosman, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 418.

²⁰Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 216.

earshot of the conversation between her husband and these messengers, found the information to be amusing because the text gives understanding that she laughed at this news. Sarah laughed because she thought she was fueled with doubts. She was under the impression that normal conception was impossible for her due to the fact that she was advanced in age. When questioned about her response to the news, out of fear, she denied laughing at this prophetic message.

In time, just as the messengers had promised, Sarah did conceive and give birth to a son called *yitschaq*, interpreted, Isaac, which means laughter. His name reflects Sarah's past laughter of doubt, and now her laughter of joy for bearing a son to Abraham. Abraham was 100 years of age and Sarah was ninety. Since the conception of Isaac is a fruit of faith, i.e., of that connection of the sexes, on the part of both parents, animated and sanctified through faith.²¹ This would later give posture to narrate another conflict between the two mothers, Sarah and Hagar. The controlling motif at this juncture of the context is the inheritance of Abraham. This would ultimately lead to the expulsion of Ishmael and leave Isaac's rights to the inheritance uncontested.

The excitement of the birth of Isaac ignited Abraham to give a feast on the day that Isaac was weaned from his mother's breast. The plot now unfolds when Sarah makes accusations that Ishmael, the son of the slave; presence has become detrimental to her son Isaac. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible states that Ishmael was playing with Isaac, but other translations indicated that the actions were indicating a sense of harm that Ishmael was always mocking Isaac. New Testament writings favor the term *mocked*, for Galatians 4:29 states, "As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was

²¹Lange, Schaff, Lewis, Gosman, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 456.

born after the spirit." It is the sight of young Ishmael playing as an equal with Isaac that causes Sarah to become jealous and angry.²² According to Steven Bridge, in his book, *Getting The Old Testament: What Is Meant To Them, What It Means For Us*, there are two beliefs in regards to the disagreement between Sarah and Hagar. Bridge states that the Yahwist source believes that Hagar was the troublemaker in this incident, but Elohist sources believe that Sarah, not Hagar, disturbed the peace.²³ No matter who instigated the issue, there is still an issue, and it was the issue of inheritance. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus presents Hagar in darker colors of guilt.²⁴ The great Protestant theologian, John Calvin; in his commentaries on Genesis in 1554, Calvin remained unmoved by the story. For Calvin, Hagar and Ismael remain reprobates. He holds that Hagar was wild and rebellious and she only repents because of hardship. As in regards to Ishmael's derision of the chosen Isaac is equivalent to blasphemy. Neither mother nor son is deserving of God's mercy. Their banishment, Calvin explains it to be divine punishment for their pride and ingratitude.²⁵ St. Augustine, the ancient theologian whom some refer to as the Father of the Church, equates that Ishmael was born in the course of nature, with the flesh, and Isaac, was born in fulfillment and promise, with the Spirit. For Augustine, Ishmael exists outside of the realm of God's grace.²⁶ So according to St.

²²W. D. Reyburn, & E. M. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1998), 467.

²³Steven L. Bridge, *Getting the Old Testament: What It Meant to Them, What It Means for Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

²⁴Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 244.

²⁵Christine Petra Sellin, *Fractured Families and Rebel Maidservants: the Biblical Hagar in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Literature* (New York NY: T & T Clark Publishers, Ltd., 2006).

²⁶David L. Jeffrey, ed., *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992).

Augustine, the illegitimizing of Ishmael was of Divine origin. Basically, both mother and son wore the stigma of outcast due to the reasoning by some that Ishmael's conception and birth was not of God, and therefore not eligible to receive the inheritance that was due to him.

Many assumptions have been given to validate or to reject the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael. Perhaps, Sarah recalled the behavior of Hagar and her disrespectful nature towards her when Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael. Sarah, now having her own child, took out her hostility out on Ishmael because of his mother's past. It may have even been that Ishmael may have angered Sarah; because of age alone he should get the firstborn portion of the inheritance (two-thirds of the property) when they died. The Israelite custom of primogeniture enforces this special status of inheritance rights to the *bekhor* or first-born male. Deuteronomy 21:17 states a later law that a firstborn son would get a double portion at the death of his father, even if that son had been born to a lesser wife. Though this was yet to be made law, until Isaac was born, Ishmael would have been expected to inherit everything; once Isaac was born, Ishmael would inherit half as much. Whatever the cause for accusation of Ishmael's mockery, it is likely he was simply reflecting the attitude of his mother, Hagar.²⁷ Legally, both sons are entitled to the inheritance.²⁸ Sarah unsympathetically, insisted to that Hagar and Ismael be cast out, giving them freedom from their servitude and removing their claim towards inheritance. Sarah refers only to the matter of sharing in the inheritance; but she evidently means this in the sense of sharing in the entire inheritance, which consists in spiritual as well as in

²⁷Williams, *Genesis: A Commentary for Bible Students*, 168.

²⁸Walter Brueggemann et al., *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 488.

physical assets.²⁹ This matter was stressful for Abraham because he is caught in the predicament that polygamists always experience: he ultimately must show preference for one child over another.³⁰ Though, according to Hebrew custom, the firstborn son was entitled to the birthright. This meant that the eldest son ranked highest after the father and in the father's absence had the father's authority and responsibility³¹ Primogeniture was disregarded in the clan of Abraham. His decision was based upon an apparently when God revealed, apparently in a dream, that he should not go against the request of Sarah to dismiss Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham is caught in the predicament that polygamists always experience: he ultimately must show preference for one child over another. The old man's love for his firstborn is the source of his anguish. Abraham's "distress" is his troubled state of mind as he frets over the repercussion of Sarah's directive.³² God revealed as a consolation of Ishmael's Abrahamic inheritance would be that he though cast out would become a great nation.

Abraham alienates this single mother Hagar, and their son Ishmael by banishing them into the desert of Beersheba with only enough food and water for basic survival. The pericope states that Abraham placed the food and water on Hagar's shoulder along with the child. There have been questions regarding this portion of the text that deals with the age of Ishmael because of the sentence structure; it appears that Abraham literally places Ishmael on her shoulder as to say that he was a toddler. This could not be true

²⁹H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*: vol. 1 and 2 (Chillicothe OH: DeWard Publishing, 2010), 836.

³⁰Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 269.

³¹Elwell & Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 360.

³²Mathews, *The New American Commentary* 269.

because according to the Abrahamic timeline, he should have been near the age of 17. It is apparent that Abraham is placing the responsibility or the burden of his son on his mother Hagar. According to the ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, Egyptian women carried burdens on their shoulders, Egyptian men upon their heads³³ Hagar and Ishmael typify in reverse Israel's experience of Egyptian hostility, expulsion, and flight. Hagar and Moses share in a pattern of events: oppression, flight in the desert where theophany occurs, return and expulsion when miraculous deliverance occurs.³⁴

The heated climate of the desert would cause persons to become disoriented and lose their place of direction. The desert represented an empty place of disposal or punishment, a place away from those things and persons that would be considered acceptable. This desert situation overcame Hagar and Ishmael to the point where Ishmael was no longer able to travel and appeared to be near death. Where Abraham's support ran out, God steps in. Hagar assists her son under the shade of a nearby brush. She distances herself away from Ishmael in a moment of apparent distress. Hagar hopes to be blind to the suffering of her son; her distance also implies that she is deaf to his cries, which only God can hear³⁵

There is a suggestion that God accepts the marginalized and discarded, and responds to their cries.³⁶ To use the pictorial language of the text, not only did God hear Ishmael, but God sent angelic assistance to Hagar as well. According to Elsa Tamez in

³³H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed. "Genesis," *The Pulpit Commentary* (London, UK: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909). 273.

³⁴Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 179.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 273.

³⁶Williams, *Genesis: A Commentary for Bible Students*, 169.

her article, *The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation*, Hagar simply has to stop crying, in spite of everything. She has to pick herself up, pick up the child, and teach him to struggle against the hardships of the desert. She has to take hold of the hand of the child forcefully, that is to say with strength, and courage. This was the role of the father in Eastern traditions. In this story, it is Hagar, the mother, who has to struggle alone, with a strong hand, in order to come out on top, and assure a future for her son.³⁷

God's messenger reminds Hagar that she has no need to fear, because of the promise from God while she was in the desert of Shur fleeing from Sarah and Abraham. The 16th chapter text of Genesis includes that she would have a son, and this was true. The pericope mentions that her son's hand would be against everyone and everyone's hand would be against him, and that he would live at odds against his kin, but the extenuating clause is that God would greatly multiply her offspring, therefore, her son could not die in this abandoned situation. Because of her remembrance of the promise and her obedience, God opened her eyes causing her to see a spring of water. Wells in the wilderness were usually covered over to prevent excessive evaporation but were then usually marked by some sign to help travellers locate them, and the whole situation is quite readily understood.³⁸

At this point Hagar replenishes her water supply and supplied her child with a much-needed drink of water. Having been miraculously saved from perishing by the angel of God, Ishmael grew up under the protection of God because even with that has

³⁷*New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World* [The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation, Elsa Tamez] (Oak Park, IL: Meyer Stone Books, 1986), 5-17.

³⁸Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 608.

occurred; he is still the son of Abraham. Ishmael settled in the wilderness of Paran, and became as he grew up an archer.³⁹

Since the conception of Isaac is a fruit of faith, i.e., of that connection of the sexes, on the part of both parents, animated and sanctified through faith⁴⁰ This event suggests that God cares for those whom sometimes that sacred and secular deem as outcast, and will give assistance to those who believe and are in need. Those persons, who are figuratively disposed, punished, and struggle for survival as a result the attitudes of others towards them.

There is a bridge of similarities that spans the threshold of the Old and New Testaments. The chords of abandonment and alienation that eventually alter the lives of the characters of both the Old and New Testament pericopes support this bridge. In the earlier writings of this document, the Old Testament pericopal narrative that has been addressed that deals with the alienation of Hagar and Ismael due to the state of inheritance, worthiness or unworthiness, and or family status. These two had an imposed altering of their lives.

As this investigation crosses onto the area of the Bible's New Testament writings, in particular, the Gospel of Mark, a women whose physical condition imposes social and secular alienation. Her unjust treatment unfortunately supported by the ancient laws and contextual traditions that were still enforced at this juncture of her life.

The Markean text is the premier pericope for this investigation. To wring out all of the exegetical essence of the focus event, all three of the synoptic Gospels must be

³⁹C. F. Keil, & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 157.

⁴⁰Lange, Schaff, Lewis, Gosman, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 456.

examined. These pericopes include Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5: 25-34, and Luke 8:34-48. The most thorough treatment, however, is to be found in Mark's account, which provides details and insights, probably gained from Peter, from whom most scholars feel John Mark drew heavily in the composition of his gospel, that are lacking in the other two records.⁴¹ Luke on the other hand gives testimony from a physician's point of view, which entails more descriptive symptoms of the sickness.

The 5th chapter, verses 25 and 26 of Markean Gospel discourse reads; Now there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.⁴²

The woman in this text bears no significant consideration to the writer; a first century woman who lived in the region of Capernaum, is nameless and her only means of identification is with her issue that she is dealing with. Her story seemed more of sideline verses or a subplot to the headline issue that Jesus was facing. There is no mention by either of the synoptic writers of the woman's age, but it is deduced that due to the nature of her illness and its longevity, that she was an adult woman. This woman not only suffered with her sickness, but what Reverend Kelon Duke calls in his sermon *Nothing To Lose*, a social misfit that was supposed to exile herself from family, friends, and familiar fellowship.⁴³

⁴¹Al Maxey, "A Scandalous Faith," *Reflections*, February 6, 2007, accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx287.htm>.

⁴²Mk 5:25-26 (NRSV).

⁴³Kelon Duke, "Nothing to Lose" (Video of sermon, Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, Glenwood IL, October 21, 2012), accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKD7lXQGPXk>.

At the time of this event, Jesus was in the audience of the leader of the synagogue by the name of Jairus, whose daughter is grievously ill. According to the Lukean writings, Jairus synagogue ruler, a person highly respected, and one who wielded great power. He was one of the most important personalities in the community, and his position allowed him to move to the, proverbial, front of the line.⁴⁴ It is Jairus who begs for the attention and possible healing for his twelve-year-old daughter. While Jesus' attention was drawn to the request of significant leader, this insignificant woman initiated a covert move in order to get to Jesus. She does not have the authoritative power or premier status in the community as with Jairus. Not only does this woman suffer from social depravation, the nature of her illness, in accordance with Levitical Law, deems her to be impure. Ironically, she has dealt with her issue the same number of years as the age of the daughter of Jairus.

This impure infirmity has caused her to experience, what Prathia Hall calls in the section Encountering the Text in Cleophus LaRue's book, *Power of the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons*, as social isolation.⁴⁵ Her physical diagnosis that classified her to be impure was described as, *ousa en rusei haimatos*,⁴⁶ a hemorrhage or a continuous flow of blood. Her condition was labeled as a disease, a plague or an affliction, which meant she had a condition of great distress, torment, or suffering.

⁴⁴Leadership Ministries Worldwide, *Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible-KJV-Matthew 1: Chapters 1-15* (Chattanooga TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1996), 215.

⁴⁵Cleophus J. LaRue, *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

⁴⁶R. G. Bratcher & E. A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1993), 171.

This woman's condition was to the point that the physicians of her day did not possess the skills or the knowledge to come up with a successful remedy. When the woman heard that Jesus was in the area, and probably had heard of his healing powers, devised a plan to tap into this possible source of healing. She, knowing her condition and the laws prohibiting her from touching others, thought that if she could only touch the border of his cloak that, hopefully, she would go unnoticed, and therefore would not be charge for this Levitical violation. The woman's ultimate goal was to steal a cure by touch, when Jewish law forbade a touch by one in her state.⁴⁷ This premeditated action clearly constituted a bold disregard of the ceremonial law.⁴⁸ She apparently shared in the superstitious notion, common in that day, which the power of a person was transmitted through their clothing.⁴⁹ The idea of faith mingled with superstition showed why the woman thought that a cure could be possible just by the contact of Jesus' clothes. Others may see this as a demonstration of the belief that a holy person's clothes carried power.⁵⁰

The reason of the woman's social alienation was partly attributed to the ancient law described in the Levitical Laws. This biblically commanded isolation added the stigma of being a social and religious outcast to the trauma of her lengthy physical

⁴⁷W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Charleston SC: BiblioLife, 2010), 375.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 376.

⁴⁹Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke, with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, vol.8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

⁵⁰R. L. Cooper, "Mark" *Holman New Testament Commentary*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 87.

ordeal.⁵¹ This mandate of impurity was addressed in the Old Testament writings of Leviticus 15:19–31.

When a woman has a discharge of blood, which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. And everything upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean. And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe [themselves] in water, and be unclean until the evening. And whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash [their] clothes, and bathe [themselves] in water, and be unclean until the evening; whether it is the bed or anything upon which she sits, when [they] touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. And if any man lies with her, and her impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash [their] clothes, and bathe [themselves] in water, and be unclean until the evening. But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge. "Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst."⁵²

This portion of the law details that people were to avoid any kind of association with a woman who had this kind of disorder. According to the law, whoever and whatever she came in contact with became contaminated or impure. The law signifies that because of her physical state, she was forbidden to attend religious services. For an unclean person to go to the tabernacle would be to defile the tabernacle and invite judgment upon the offender.

⁵¹D. Smith, *Mark: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 123.

⁵²Lev 15:19-31 (NRSV).

The essence of the woman's physical, social, and religious trauma hinged on the premise that the premier factor of blood was involved in her situation. Jewish history signifies that blood symbolized life, and the flow or discharge of blood signified death. Mark portrayed her as a complete outcast in every aspect, unable to approach people and ceremonially unfit to approach God.⁵³ In the parallel accounts, Mark's description of the woman's ailment is far more dramatic than Matthew's, who doesn't even mention physicians, and only gives a brief account in this saga. Luke, the third writer of the Synoptic Gospels does show more agreement with Mark by saying that no physicians could heal her.

The woman was incarcerated in social isolation because her discharge had lasted continuously for twelve years. She was considered unclean and untouchable during the entire time of this personal saga. According to textual evidence, she had exhausted all of her funds on medicinal assistance to rid her of her complication on the first-century equivalent of gynecologists. Whatever the physicians attempted, did not improve her state at all, as a matter of fact, over the twelve-year saga her condition became more severe. In desperation to find relief, the woman exhausted all of her financial resources in an effort to obtain some sort of cure. So not only was this woman in physical and emotional distress, she was also had to deal with financial hardship.

There were some so-called traditional cures or ritual cleansing that this woman probably tried but to no avail. The Jewish cures included such practices as carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag around one's neck in the summer and in a cotton rag

⁵³Smith, *A Commentary for Bible Students*, 122–123.

in the winter, or carrying barley corn from the dung of a white female donkey.⁵⁴ This supposed cure also signified to the community the nature of her ailment that further marginalized the one who suffered with this condition making her odyssey even more difficult. If this woman who suffered with this unfortunate circumstance had been married her husband probably would have divorced her as she would have been unable to care for her children or for others without making them all unclean. Her unclean status would also have meant that she was unable to attend the temple or other worship services.

The condition in question forbade this suffering personality from physical contact with other persons in her family, community, and in worship because she did not fit the mold of acceptance. After all else had failed, this desperate and downcast damsel heard that this Jesus was in her vicinity, and she knew of his reputation for healing, that maybe there was a possible breakthrough for her. Her isolation even interfered with her attempt to be healed by Jesus. The text reveals that there was a large crowd around Jesus, and therefore she could not touch those that surrounded Jesus, not even to mention the fact that touching Jesus could make him ceremonially unclean. Not only was the crowd an issue but she also faced another. Jesus was in dialog with the ruler Jairus, who clearly because of his stature should have drawn Jesus' complete attention. This woman's interference with this ruler's desire could have alone, placed her life in jeopardy. The fact that she was a woman made her request secondary to a man, not to mention a male ruler. Therefore, when the woman touched Jesus, she would be in violation of the Jewish Law, and social interference, and she was susceptible to the punishment of this crime.

⁵⁴R. J. D. Utley, *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, vol. 2 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 65.

Jewish history indicates that Jesus was probably wearing an *arba konfot*, a four-cornered outer tunic, a tallit, with tassels or *tzitzit*. The tassels or *tzitzit* were associated with a man's authority.⁵⁵ The outer garment was known as a tallit. In fact, these tassels are tied into 613 knots to constantly remind them of the 613 laws of Moses. So in fact, what the woman actually touched was not Jesus, but the *kanaph*, outer edge, which is translated *the hem* or more accurately the corner or wing. The Markean writer does not indicate and actual touching, juxtaposing with Matthew and Luke that write on a physical contact. Whether the healing took place by a physical or faithful connect is uncertain, but according to the text, a miracle was manifested through some form of touch. Therefore, when Jesus asks who touched his clothes, is because he felt his virtue leave implied that someone connected in some fashion with his authority and power. In the Greek, virtue would be *aretē*, meaning any excellence of a person or most commonly translated as power.⁵⁶ The disciples could not determine which one particular person touched the clothes of Jesus, due to the enormous press of people. This moment would suggest that Jesus was able to discern the difference between inadvertent touch and a touch of one in who in faith expected deliverance.

When the woman saw that she had been exposed, she was in fear because of her actions. She could have been punished for what she did. Instead of reprimanding the woman, Jesus refers to her with the affectionate title of daughter, indicating a change in her physical condition has also resulted in a change in her identity. She is no longer the

⁵⁵Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: the Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History* (New York NY: William Morrow, 1991), 725-726.

⁵⁶D. O. Swann, 1996. D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman, eds., "Virtue" *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press).

woman with an issue; she has been transformed into a daughter within the community.⁵⁷ Jesus' final words are, according to Susan Harber, are grounded in the Jewish literary tradition. Jesus tells the woman to go in peace, *and* be healed of your diseases. It is after Jesus tells the woman that her faith has initiated her wellness, but leave in the peace of mind of her healing. This implies that there is a continuation towards this woman's full recovery as it pertains to Jewish rituals. In accordance with Leviticus 15:28, that the cessation of the blood flow is the first indication of a cure, but healing can only be verified after the seven day wait period. It is after this wait period that the woman is considered completely healed and ceremonially cleaned.⁵⁸ This distinction indicates a relationship with him. Jesus informs the woman that because of her faith, not the touching of his clothing, she is *sesoken*, healed or better translated saved from this twelve-year affliction.

The narrative of the hemorrhaging woman is, first and foremost, a miracle story concerning healing. A woman who is ill seeks and obtains a reversal of her condition because she has faith in Jesus. By definition, the woman's affliction has a secondary component: impurity. This impurity is alluded to in the story and is essential to the progression of the narrative. She approaches Jesus furtively because of her impurity and sets up a situation in which Jesus' power to heal is transmitted to authenticate the power of Jesus as being supernatural—the power of God. This power is accessible to anyone, even the impure. The only requirement is faith.⁵⁹

This story brings hope for those persons, who are figuratively disposed, punished and struggle for survival, or just being able to fit in. Because of the attitudes of others

⁵⁷S. Haber, 2003, "A Woman's Touch: Feminist Encounters with the Hemorrhaging Woman in Mark 5.24-34," *Journal For The Study Of The New Testament* 26, no. 2: 171-192. New Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost (accessed September 5, 2013).

⁵⁸Ibid., 184-185.

⁵⁹Ibid., 186.

towards them in regards to the unfortunate, uncontrolled, unwelcomed circumstances and or conditions, these persons become the outcast or social misfits.

In both pericopal accounts, persons who were considered different by the sacred and social communities faced cruel and unfair treatment simply because they did not fit in. In the Old Testament narrative, the persons were alienated because of status; status within the family arena as it pertained to birthrights. A young woman was not asked but forced to serve as a surrogate to her mistress, and when the focus of attention shifted from the supposedly accepted person to the lower unacceptable person, alienation issues evolved. At a closer look, one may see that fear of losing social and financial rankings play a major part in the issues alienation and abandonment. The Old Testament narrative also indicates that these issues transcend into proceeding generation. Ishmael was a product of marginalization and as a result was deprived and alienated by his own father. In retrospect, Abraham and Sarah may have alienated Hagar and Ishmael, but where humankind fail I their actions towards the unaccepted, God accepts and adopts.

In the New Testament narrative a woman, who was not even dignified or seemingly important enough to recognize by name was socially and sacredly denied. She was denied acceptance due to an unfortunate illness and the ritualistic and bias adherence of an ancient law. She could not be touched, nor could she touch anyone else because of the belief that her marginalization would transfer into the live of those whom she contacted. She was not only marginalized because of ritualistic laws, she also suffered with being marginalized because of sexism, classism, and the phobia of family, friends, and community.

Both texts show how the sacred and ceremonial communities instituted alienation and abandonment towards the marginalized. The mistreatment of persons based upon misinterpretation of biblical mandates, and just the common fear of the unknown and or the indifferent does not justify the unacceptance of certain people. On the other hand, there is also a Divine response to both circumstances that indicate care, consideration, and most of all, the acceptance for the marginalized.

Theological Foundation

The effort of this compilation of this writing is to weave a theological thread that assist and or oppose the ideology of the church being a place that includes rather than excludes the marginalized. The marginalized are those who have lost the freedom of life not of their own fault but by the self-loving motives of the fellow creation.⁶⁰ Howard Thurman suggests that these are persons with their backs against the wall. They are the poor, the disinherited, and the dispossessed.⁶¹ The evil from which humans suffer can be assessed as alienation: all kinds of alienation from oneself, from other humans, from the world, and from God. At any level and in any relationship a painful and inappropriate separation or alienation calls for a remedy. Evil can be described as ruptured or deficient relationships.⁶²

The substratum of these notions will be drawn from the relevancy of certain theological disciplines, and or historical and contemporary theologians.

⁶⁰“Christ and the Marginalized,” *Winston's Scribbling* (blog), March 11, 2006, accessed October 7, 2013, <http://winstonscribbling1.blogspot.com>.

⁶¹Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 13.

⁶²Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: a Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 2009), 293.

Christology stands at the foreground of theological disciplines that propose the concept of the church being an entity of inclusiveness. This thought is based upon certain defining details of the discipline of Christology, which describes who Jesus is and where He stands in relation to the social, political, and economic issues of humankind. It pertains to a relationship to the suffering, and hope of the oppressed and destitute.⁶³ The elements of Christology that weaves a thread through the fabric of the marginalized would show that Jesus' earthly journey placed him in similar situations as those who were considered the least. It is Jesus who brings forth redemption for the whole world.⁶⁴ The late Reverend Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor believed that Jesus' life lessons are the models of Christianity. Jesus inspires all to love those who may not want love and loving those who seem not to deserved to be loved.⁶⁵

It is the poor that he addressed his mission in a special, privileged manner, it is with them that he lives; it is for them that he posits the signs of the coming of the Kingdom miracles, the expulsion of demons, wondrous food and drink. It is from a starting point among the poor that he denounces the basic sin and tears away the mask from rationalizations of that sin. Because of all of this he comes into conflict with the mighty and is persecuted to death.⁶⁶

Scripture indicate that he was a Jew that resided in the region of Galilee called Nazareth. Secondly, Jesus was a poor Jew, and lastly, Jesus was a member of a minority group in the midst of a larger dominant and controlling group.⁶⁷ The highlight of what makes Jesus so significant is not the way in which he resembles his followers, but the

⁶³Donald W. Musser, Joseph L. Price, *New and Enlarged Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 97.

⁶⁴O'Collins, *Christology: a Biblical, Historical, and Systematic*, 297.

⁶⁵Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 195.

⁶⁶Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2004), 13.

⁶⁷Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 16-18.

way in which he differed from the rest of them all.⁶⁸ It appears that Jesus shows compassion for those who suffer because of others. He recognizes the injustice inflicted on a select group of people based upon their indifferences. Jesus spent most of his time here on earth with the weak and wretched of humanity.⁶⁹ Nietzsche argued that Jesus' relationship with the rejected contributed to a fatal flaw in Christianity.⁷⁰ Jesus however exemplified care for those who were considered the least of them. Sweet ingeniously contrived a list of actions of what he called Jesus' Heaven Seven that the world cannot live without. These show, again, Jesus' attention to the marginalized. They are (1) Feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty; (2) show hospitality to strangers; (3) clothed the naked; (4) visit the imprisoned; (5) care for those who are sick; (6) befriend the sinner; and (7) side with the weak and the least.⁷¹

Christology is a multidimensional discipline. Many theologians have taken the concepts of Christology and formulated offshoots from this ideology. One such idea is the Black Christ. This is an effort to theologically connect the plight of the historical African-Americans. The Black Christian experience has been one in which Black people have consistently confirmed the presence of a sustaining and liberating Christ in their lives.⁷² Cornell West explains that the historical and contemporary struggles of the

⁶⁸Ibid., 19.

⁶⁹Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus: A Theography* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 150.

⁷⁰Ibid., 150.

⁷¹Ibid., 154.

⁷²Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 2.

African-Americans have forged this unique version of Christianity.⁷³ James Cones says that the Blackness of Christ did not refer to Jesus' ethnic characteristics, but rather it was a symbol of Jesus' existential commitments or the nature of Christ. It was how Jesus identified with the oppressed of his time.⁷⁴ The reflection of this movement of Blackness in Christology came during the era of Black conscienceless of the late 1960's, and can be traced back to the time of slavery.⁷⁵ Slavery in the adolescent years of the United States supported the idea of hierarchal relationships between certain ethnic groups. There was an idea of superiority based upon certain biological and social standards.⁷⁶ This mindset that targeted this marginalized people of color was supported by the various agencies of the scientific and political arenas.⁷⁷

The strange thing about slavery is that carried a bilaterality understanding of Christology based upon the Black and the White point of view. To the White slaveholders, this ideology stood as the crux of reasoning of why slavery was a good thing to both sides. Their concept was that they were introducing a hethenistic culture to Christ, and that Christ justified slavery.⁷⁸ In reality, it appears that the oppressor was trying to justify the oppressed. James Cone puts it in this wise, "As long as the oppressor can be sure that [Christology] does not threaten his social, economic, and political

⁷³Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments: Illuminations of the Crisis in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 67.

⁷⁴Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 58-59.

⁷⁵Ibid., 9-10.

⁷⁶Ibid., 10.

⁷⁷Ibid., 11.

⁷⁸Ibid., 14.

security, he can enslave in the name of Christ.⁷⁹ The slaves on the other hand look towards Christ as an emancipator, one who understood their anguish and would ultimately free them from the bonds of slavery.⁸⁰ So one hand Christology endorsed marginality, and one the other stood paramount as the spiritual Deliverer for the marginalized.⁸¹

It was the movement of the Civil Rights, that the Black Christology was heightened. This was a time when the people of color of this nation faced some the most horrific and alienated tactics known in human history.

Nearly 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, African Americans in Southern states still inhabited a starkly unequal world of disenfranchisement, segregation and various forms of oppression, including race-inspired violence. “Jim Crow” laws at the local and state levels barred them from classrooms and bathrooms, from theaters and train cars, from juries and legislatures.⁸²

One of the leaders who stood and historically stand synonymously with the Civil Rights Movement is that in the person of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. King’s understanding of the relationship between the Black community and Christology was that this marginalized and tattered remnant that constituted the fabric of the United States were included in the family of God.⁸³ King faced cruel acts towards him and his family because of the stance that he took. James Cone, a Black theologian, said that when

⁷⁹J. Deotis Roberts, *A Black Political Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 153.

⁸⁰Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World the Slaves Made* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1976), 253.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²Clayborne Carson “Civil Rights Movement,” History, October 9, 2013, accessed October 9, 2013, <http://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement>.

⁸³Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 38-39.

king realized that truly God was beside him and his people in their struggles, seemed to strengthen him to persevere through this antagonistic struggle.⁸⁴

The various interpretations of Christology have at times been as harmful as it is helpful. The understanding of Christ stood as a beacon light of hope for Blacks from their perspective, and it was a quagmire of despair in the modality usage by White oppressors. The duality of positive and negative affects are seen not only when it pertains to ethnicity, but in gender as well. Feminist theologians claim that Christology is problematic based upon the ontological necessity of the masculine imagery of Jesus.⁸⁵

Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether writes,

Once the mythology about Jesus as Messiah or divine *Logos*, with its traditional masculine imagery, is stripped off, the Jesus of the synoptic Gospels can be recognized as a figure remarkably compatible with feminism." This Jesus is an iconoclastic prophet who proclaims the reversal of the social order, a reversal which does not simply introduce new inequalities, but which aims at "a new reality in which hierarchy and dominance are overcome as principles of social relations." Jesus speaks a liberating Word, which disrupts the patriarchal structuring of society with its entrenched relations of hierarchy, dominance, and oppression; in this sense, Jesus can be understood as the kenosis of patriarchy.⁸⁶

Women are an intricate part of the sacred marginalized. Biblical narratives highlight this idea. Among the poor it is the widows who are the most destitute. In regards to the ritualistically unclean, it is a woman with a flow of blood. Among the morally unacceptable, it is the prostitutes who are the furthest from righteousness.

⁸⁴James H. Cone, "The Theology of Martin King, Jr.," *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review* 40, no. 4 (1986), 127.

⁸⁵Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981), 45-46.

⁸⁶_____. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology: With a New Introduction*, 10th Anniversary Ed. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993), 135-137.

According to Ruether, women are the oppressed of the oppressed.⁸⁷ One particular group who is defined by neither ethnicity nor gender should not monopolize the discipline of Christology. Christ is not to be encapsulated, but available and afforded by all humankind. Christ is nonpartisan; he is the archetype of freedom.⁸⁸ Ruether believed that the maleness of Christ was not important, what was foremost was his liberating modality of redemption.⁸⁹ There has been some disagreement in regards to this matter from other feminist. Daphne Hampson focused on the maleness of Christ and questioned whether an individual could have universal significance. Daly argues that they needed to be saved from men, rather than by a man.⁹⁰

Christology is therefore in the eye of the beholder. Throughout its existence, this concept has been manipulated to fit the beliefs or desires of various groups. If the Bible is the mandate of who or what Christ is, then proper exegetical efforts should reveal that Jesus, according to the Lukean gospel and the book of the prophet Isaiah, mission was to introduce liberty to all who are oppressed.

The next discipline that pertains to ideology of inclusiveness of the marginalized is ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the church. Before one can examine the functions of the church, there must first be an understanding of what the church is, and what the church is not.

The Greek term translated church in the New Testament is *ekklesia*. An *ekklesia* is a community gathering or assembly. The understanding is that this assembly is a

⁸⁷Ibid., 136.

⁸⁸James H. Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black-Church Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 11.

⁸⁹McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 337.

⁹⁰Ibid.

gathering of people united by a common identity and purpose.⁹¹ In the adolescent years of the church, the Romans referred to as a *basilica*, Latin for public gathering. The German term was *kirche*, which is translated house of the Lord. According to Pastor Andy Stanley,

The word church is not a translation from the Greek, but a substitution for the Greek. And a bad one at that. The German term *kirche* and the Greek term *ekklisia* refer to two different ideas. A *kirche* is a location. An *ekklisia* is a purposeful gathering of people. What began as a movement, dedicated to carrying the truth of Jesus Christ to every corner of the world, had become an insider-focused, hierarchical, ritualized institution that bore little resemblance to its origin.⁹²

The church of today is split up into many denominations that can be roughly located in five streams, (1) the Roman Catholic; (2) Eastern Orthodox; (3) Reformed; (4) Anglican / Episcopalian; and (5) Pentecostal / Charismatic.⁹³ In order to meet global and denominational difference, the church exhibits distinct characteristics. The church is holy, a prophetic witness in the world. The church is universal. The church has a mission to extol its identity and express its relevance, and witness globally. The church stands as an authentic expression of justice, the reality of loved expressed by solidarity, and the reality of mercy for all.⁹⁴ Lastly, the church is obedient to the modality of Christ.⁹⁵

This gathering is an ecumenical evidence of God's love for all humankind, and a source of empowerment for the oppressed and outcast. The church hears and responds to the cry of the cry of the oppressed. By this attitude of the early church, it was able to

⁹¹Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 60.

⁹²Ibid., 62.

⁹³Musser & Price, *New and Enlarged Handbook of Christian Theology*, 141-142.

⁹⁴Boff, 5.

⁹⁵Ibid.

capture the souls of many who were not considered the elite in social settings.⁹⁶ The church should be quick to see this since it is the body in which the head is Christ. The body of Christ is the today's Moses that God has chosen to use for his Redemptive Act. Therefore the Church has to see, listen thereby know as God does.⁹⁷

Leonard Sweet writes that church is the means by which Christ continues to work, to teach, and to establish his sovereign rule over the world.⁹⁸ The reasoning of John Wesley did not envision the church in form or polity, but he understood the church to be defined in the action of witness and mission.⁹⁹

The origin of the church is vital in understanding the fullness of ecclesiology. First of all, the church is not an offshoot of the Old Testament tabernacles. Jesus is the head of the church, but he did not institute the church while he was here on earth. Before Jesus was executed, he polled his disciples, and asked them who did the people believe that he was. They supposedly responded with various answers. He then questioned one of his close associates that same question, and the response that he was the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. It was then that Jesus reveled the forthcoming of his church, and that its foundation would be based upon their knowledgeable relationship of him. He spoke in future tense, when he said that upon that rock he would build his church. Some argue that the church got its start at Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came upon the people of the upper room, Dr. E. C. Bragg stated:

⁹⁶Boff, 10.

⁹⁷"Christ and the Marginalized," *Winston's Scribbling* (blog), March 11, 2006, accessed October 7, 2013, <http://winstonscribbling1.blogspot.com>.

⁹⁸Sweet & Viola, *A Theography*, 159.

⁹⁹John Wesley, *John Wesley: Library of Protestant Thought* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 1980), 307.

The first argument of the birth of the church is when Jesus stated, “That upon this rock I will build my church”, continues the argument for Pentecost being the birthday of the church. There is an absence of any mention of the church in the Gospels except for the two times and those in a future sense marks that important body as a future one. Immediately after Pentecost, the church as a corporate body is recognized. This church is placed under the jurisdiction and administration of the Holy Spirit who indwells.¹⁰⁰

Just as much as the church is, cultural and social influences have affected the church. Those who tend to suffer from these unfortunate changes are more than likely to be the least of them, which happen to be the marginalized and the oppressed. Some churches are slowly moving from being an agent of change to an agent of assimilation to its cultural environment.

One systematic problem is the lost understanding of liturgy: persons transformed into community offering praise, thanksgiving, and their lives to God. Corporate is about coming to offer and give, rather than coming to have one's needs and preferences met. As God gathers us to corporate worship, worship must never be aimed to please one's self, but it must be grounded in the formation of community offering thanksgiving to God, being transformed by God's Spirit in the likeness of Christ.¹⁰¹

Alexander Schmemmann, an Orthodox scholar, suggests that the church itself springs from the very event of the Last Supper or Eucharistic ecclesiology.¹⁰² This ideology has three distinctive characteristics. (1) The *koinonia* which is the communion or joint participation; (2) The sacrifice of love for humankind; and (3) The doctrine of eschatology. This concept introduces the understanding of corporate worship. A time in which, all are welcomed to the table. There are no exclusions from this. This action exercises the modality of gathering under a unified thought of love and sacrifice. Under

¹⁰⁰E. C. Bragg, “Systematic Theology: Ecclesiology” (Lecture, Trinity, FL), accessed October 10, 2013, <http://trinitycollege.edu/assets/files/ECBragg/EcclesiologyR.pdf>.

¹⁰¹Brent Peterson, *Eucharistic Ecclesiology: A Community of Joyful Brokenness* (Seattle, WA: Wesleyan Theological Society Meeting, 2005).

¹⁰²Sweet & Viola, *A Theography*, 3.

this umbrella, the marginalized are welcomed guests at the table. The Didache's Eucharistic prayer that highlights the joining of the many into the body of Christ in the Eucharistic meal supports this thought. "Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever."¹⁰³ Historically and recently in some church settings, the marginalized have been excluded from the table.

In time, the church came face to face with a dilemma. Either it would have to continue with methods of liberation, share their struggles, and face the consequences of it becoming marginalized, or maintain its allegiance to the capitalistic state.¹⁰⁴ Non-attendees from the gathering have faced various reasons that did not allow their presence. Social, cultural, gender biases, age, and other factors have hampered corporate worship, and therefore has established a group of outcasts who are welcomed with the supposedly agents of the sacred community. The church has become isolated rather than inclusive.

One particular group in history that has intently disregarded from attending the table of love for all has been the African-American diaspora. Racism has been instinctively etched in the annals of this country's history. Civil Rights pioneer, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his 1960 television interview on NBC's Meet The Press,

I think it is one of the tragedies of our nation, one of the shameful tragedies, that at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours... I definitely think that Christian church should be integrated, and any church that

¹⁰³"The Didache the Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations," Early Christian Writings, 2013, accessed October 10, 2013, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>.

¹⁰⁴Boff, 10.

stands against intergradation and that has a segregated body is standing against the Spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ, and it fails to be a true witness.¹⁰⁵

Racism has oppressed many, and the church should have been a place of liberation. A place where there aren't any discriminatory activities within or without. The Black church has historically been in the forefront of Black people's fight for life and liberation against the tyrannies of racial oppression.¹⁰⁶ The history of this country shows how slaves were used as cheap labor. Throughout these years of oppression, these slaves sought some power or some evidence of freedom from the hands of their oppressors. Some of the slaves heard about this Jesus that their slaveholders spoke about. When the slaves heard of the narratives about this Old Testament emancipator named Moses, and how God entrusted him to lead God's people from the bondage of their Egyptian overseers. The slaves also heard about this New Testament Jew called Jesus, who exemplified love and compassion for the oppressed and marginalized. It was difficult for these slaves to relate to persons who stood for liberation. Their oppressors could not conceive the idea of their slaves needing to know about Jesus. There was a notion that the Blacks were beasts that were only slightly superior to baboons and monkeys. And if they were beasts, then they did not have a soul to save.¹⁰⁷

With this newly acquired knowledge by the slaves, their slaveholders became concerned. They felt that if their slaves would have these religious meetings that this ideology would lead to usurp the slaveholders' authority. In spite of the resistance, the slaves formed churches, often no more than an area of seclusion in the nearby woods.

¹⁰⁵Meet The Press, Interview with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., October 10, 2013 (originally aired April 17, 1960).

¹⁰⁶Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 3–4.

¹⁰⁷Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do with It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 129.

Religious exercises of slaves were closely watched to detect plans for escape or insurrection. African-American churches showed an air of militancy in the eyes of white Americans. Insurrections such as Nat Turner's in Virginia, born out of the religious inspiration of slaves, horrified white Americans. Understanding the potential end that could result from the religious experiences of African slaves, many white Americans opposed the participation of Blacks in Christianity. In African-American history, "the church" has long been at the center of Black communities. It has established itself as the greatest source for African American religious enrichment and secular development.¹⁰⁸

White Christians did allow their slaves to attend church, but not the kind with the freedom that they held to. These churches, again, under the sponsorship of White overseers, instituted what is as slavery churches. These churches were established to forcibly indoctrinate the slaves into this religious notion. The motives were not so Godly, but beneficial to the slaveholders. Christianity was to be used not as a tool of freedom, but as a tool of domination.¹⁰⁹ Dwight Hopkins proposes that slave churches served various purposes. Some of which included, the attempt to socialize the entire Black race into an abject, groveling state of obedience that would have the slaves believing that the White race was the superior race of God.¹¹⁰ It was rare in these settings that the slaves ever heard about God being a liberator the wicked, earthly principalities and powers.¹¹¹ For the slaves, Christianity was used to oppress the already oppressed into a people who would accept their oppressive state. Slave churches were also a method of the slaveholders to display their slaves like a prized animal.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸“The Black Church: A Brief History,” African American Registry, 2013, accessed October 10, 2013, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/black-church-brief-history.

¹⁰⁹Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 83.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 86.

The Black church became a source of hope for the group of unaccepted. Through slavery, the Civil War, the Black church continued to move forward. During the Civil Rights Movement, again the church stood as a launching pad for planning and dealing the aggressive and oppressive White America. For African-American community, the church was certainly “a rock in a weary land.”

For white America, many of their clergy used Christianity to degrade and treat people of color inhumane. They preached that the Blacks were descendants of Ham and were cursed with the dark pigment of their skin. Furthermore, white clergy and their parishioners were lynching, the murderous acts against mainly Black men, by a biblically endorsement. These white Christians felt as if they were doing God a favor by ridding the world of these dangerous and sinful individuals.

As it was in the early stages of the church, issues developed within the Black church. There was a struggle to continue to walk with those whom stood on the platform of the oppressed or develop a more mainstream type of theology.

It appears that that Black church was not prepared to respond to the concerns outside of race. Black women were being oppressed right in the confines of the place of hope. Black youth have found it problematic in being included in the church. Divine love bestows on us your personal value and identity, so that each may say that they are a person God loves.¹¹³

Women in the Black church outnumber men by a wide margin, but yet they are the group that is oppressed and marginalized. The misinterpretation of scriptures and traditions are leading to a major oppressive move of the Black church within itself. Black

¹¹³O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic*, 281.

women in the church are under double bondage.¹¹⁴ There have been churches that stifled the presence of women in the church. This marginalized-majority could not exercise the same rights of her male counterparts. The woman was supposed to be silent, could not hold any office of leadership, was not allowed in the pulpit, and certainly not given the right to preach. This concept should be labeled as free, but not free. Women and others on the social margins have been more aware of the mismatch between the church's proclamation and its internal practices; and this has been the biggest obstacle to faith.¹¹⁵ Women in the Black church have been ecclesiastically lynched. They were cut off by male dominance within a place where they were supposed to be free. Their lives in this sacred dungeon only allowed them to have limited freedom. Surprisingly, that this would take place when the women served and nurtured, and this is a characteristic of Christ. In this church setting, what was taught to assist the oppressed was then used against the oppressed. And as for the male figures in the church, they have now moved from being the oppressed to that of being the oppressor. The bondage of women was supported by the masculine writing styles of the bible. Contrary to popular opinion, nowhere does the Bible prescribe timeless, trans-cultural male and female roles. Nor does it envisage a one-man model of church leadership.¹¹⁶

One of the biggest reasons why there is marginalization in sacred communities is the lack of understanding. Biblical scripture indicates that this lacking produces failure. There are some in the ecclesiastical that view acceptance of a person means to also accept

¹¹⁴Harris, *Pastoral Theology: a Black-Church Perspective*, 66.

¹¹⁵Vinoth Ramachandra, "Marginalizing Women in Church Betrays Gospel," *Ethics Daily*, June 05, 2012, accessed October 11, 2013, <http://www.ethicsdaily.com/marginalizing-women-in-church-betrays-gospel-cms-19672>.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

their way of living. Howard Thurman asserts that to love them means to recognize some deep respect and reverence for their persons. It does not mean that by loving them that you condone their way of life.¹¹⁷ This is a major issue in the church as it pertains to the marginalized. Rather than learning about them in an attempt to love them, the church would rather ignore them or simply abandon them.

Historical Foundation

The effort of this section is to reveal historical evidence towards the rationale for the attitudes of the sacred and secular communities that have invoked abandonment and alienation issues among the marginalized. When in fact, the sacred and the secular are major cast members in the make up of communities, but they do not make up the entirety. There are others in the mix that may not fit into what is considered the normal community, who just want to fit in. Mass opinions, perceptions, and cultural attitudes sometimes interfere with morphing of the masses. The term community is derived from the Greek word *koinonia*, which means fellowship. These two groups exhibit a lack of fellowship when it comes to those who are different. Many literary, theological, and psychosocial thinkers have considered this subject. The great theological mind of Samuel DeWitt Proctor gives a defining argument towards legitimate communities as builders of another's total personhood, looking upon persons as equals to each other. He says that each person is endowed with rights that are inherent and with worth that is conferred by God.¹¹⁸ In regards to this statement, the sacred and secular communities should be a place

¹¹⁷Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 94-95.

¹¹⁸Samuel D. Proctor, *Samuel Proctor: My Moral Odyssey* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1989), 149.

for all, but historical evidence proves different. History reveals that the sacred and secular communities seem to have self-imposed themselves as un-benched judges in the courtroom of what is acceptable and unacceptable. According to German theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that by judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace, which others are just, as entitled to as we are.¹¹⁹

Nathaniel Hawthorne, a 19th-century American literary legend, writes a book, *The Scarlet Letter*, which deals with a young Puritan woman during the 17th in Boston, who births a child outside of her marriage. The actions of this woman deemed her as an adulterer. Her badge of shame was a letter “A” that she had to wear on her dress signifying her guilt. Furthermore, she was exposed to public humiliation and time in prison.¹²⁰ The focus character of Hawthorne’s novel is fictitious, but there are countless individuals who have suffered sacred and secular humiliation because of their gender, culture/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social encounters. As the main character in Hawthorne’s classic wore a badge of shame, many persons who actually lived to have experienced being badged because of their differences.

In Alice Walker’s book, *The Color Purple*, she pens a line that speaks on behalf of those who are treated differently because of their difference through the main character Celie. Celie was abused and raped by than man she thought was her father who later sells her off to get married to Mister, who only wants to get married to have someone who can watch his four kids, work in the fields, and look after the house. Mr. abuses Celie both physically and verbally. Physically by raping and beating her. Verbally, by being called

¹¹⁹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 185.

¹²⁰Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Boston, MA: Dover Publications, 1994).

ugly and dumb. This marginalized personality believes that she is more than what she is labeled. She shows that when she says,

I am an expression of the divine, just like a peach is, just like a fish is. I have a right to be this way...I can't apologize for that, nor can I change it, nor do I want to... We will never have to be other than who we are in order to be successful...We realize that we are as ourselves unlimited and our experiences valid. It is for the rest of the world to recognize this, if they choose.¹²¹

Walker's work shows how Black women were mistreated by their own and others. The women of this novel and this era were seen as ignorant, unimportant, servants, and sexual gratifiers with no rights or humanistic feelings or worth. It is similar actions in society that caused many males to fashion a belief that a woman had a specific place, which kept women in a marginalized state.

These differences have caused persons to be abandoned and alienated by the secular and even the sacred communities. Wayne Oates writes in *The Conditions of Alienation and Abandonment*:

Abandonment and alienation are related to each other. Ordinarily, alienation follows some sort of abandonment of people, an estrangement, a leaving. An alien is a foreigner, someone who does not belong. People can become "foreigners," strangers to each other, even if they are blood kin to each other. Webster's Dictionary defines being alienated as "inimical or indifferent whereas a former attachment subsided." The conditions of abandonment and alienation in the flux of human relationships today leave people estranged from each other, isolated strangers who yearn for a home, a sense of belonging, a community of shared faith.¹²²

¹²¹Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, 10th Anniversary Ed. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1992).

¹²²Wayne Oates, "He Conditions of Alienation and Abandonment," *Review and Expositor*, no. 89 (1992): 321.

Alienation is an integral part of human condition. It spares no, age, gender, race, culture, socio-economic level, or time in history.¹²³ It is expressed in senseless acts of violence, thwarted self-realization, family breakdown, impersonalization, and dehumanization, which root issue is that of control.¹²⁴ Alienation and abandonment deteriorates the human soul and interferes with hope, security, belonging, love, and values and virtues of human integrity and growth.¹²⁵ Abandonment causes feelings of being left outside or intentionally or emotionally discarded.¹²⁶

One would think that the sacred community, the church, would stand opposite of the secular, but there has been mutation in which the sacred has begun to exhibit secular similarities. Somewhere in time, an air of exclusiveness has been birthed in some of the churches in this country. Martin King Jr. addresses this thought in his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* that the church is becoming an irrelevant social club¹²⁷ with rights to reject and to accept. In the book *The Church and the Churches*, Karl Barth says that the church (sacred) is the pillar and ground of truth. Barth says that the task of the church is to purify itself from any element which is foreign to its origin and essence, and which, having such an essence and origin, it ought not to tolerate: it must look back to its origin

¹²³Bobby B. Cunningham, "The Healing Work of Forgiving: A Pastoral Care Response to Alienation and Abandonment," *Review and Expositor* 89 (1992).

¹²⁴William C. Bier, *Alienation: Plight of Modern Man?* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1972), 35-37.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 373.

¹²⁶J. Ray Rice, *Thank You for Loving Me! The Psychology of Abandonment, Healing, and Loving* (Scotts Valley, CA: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2009), 11.

¹²⁷Martin Luther King and Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Signet Classics, 2000).

and essence, set its compass by that bearing, suffer itself to be purged and reformed by that standard.¹²⁸

According to scriptures, Jesus came to seek and save the lost.¹²⁹ In this specific assignment of Jesus, the Head of the Church, the lost are those persons who were not part of the chosen. It is also biblically substantiated that God hears the cry of the oppressed and responds by sustaining and accompanying them in their journey towards liberation. This is the *diakonia* or service of God: a *diakonia* of liberation as well as of restoring dignity, and ensuring justice and peace.¹³⁰ They were the abandoned and alienated. By this then the sacred should be a place of acceptance from the secular rather than rejected back into the secular. The leaders of the church should follow the methodology of Jesus and disturb the present arrangement.¹³¹ In Mike Erre's *Death by Church: Rescuing Jesus from His Followers, Recapturing God's Hope for His People*; he states that there is a hunger. He said that there are people who are hungering for:

- Grace—to see all those excluded and hurt by the church brought again into contact with Jesus and His bride and told of their pricelessness.
- Joy—the satisfaction of acceptance
- Justice—that the church live up to its original purpose

¹²⁸Karl Barth, *The Church and the Churches*, New ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 7.

¹²⁹*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989) (Lk 19:10).

¹³⁰“Theological Perspectives On Diakonia in 21st Century,” Oikoumene, June 06, 2012, accessed July 9, 2013, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/theological-perspectives-on-diakonia-in-21st-century>.

¹³¹Walter Brueggemann, *The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 1.

- Worship—the offering of our whole selves as the only fitting response to God’s mercy, holiness, love, and grace
- Truth—a definite word, a voice with authority, a way of discerning what really matters and why.
- Honesty—to find places where we no longer have to hide our true selves from God or each other.¹³²

Historically, the sacred has alienated or abandoned persons because of gender, religious culture, race, sexual orientation, social positions, and age differences. The attempt of this paper is to shed light of alienation and abandonment throughout the history of the church.

According to historical facts of the early church in the Apostolic Period, one of the most significant marginalized personalities was the early Christians in Rome. The church did not follow the popular Roman superfluous lifestyle. The Roman focus of life was based upon power and wealth. The early church, on the other hand, embraced a more essential concept of living composed of charity and humility rather than prestige and power. These juxtaposing sets of values resulted different treatment of the marginalized.¹³³ The Roman society categorized its people into two legal classes, the *honestiores*, or the wealthy upper class, and the *humiliores*, or the poor, sick and working class.¹³⁴ The other marginalized groups in this Roman society were the slaves and women. Ironically, the early church welcomed the so-called outcast or the marginalized.

¹³²Mike Erre, *Death by Church: Rescuing Jesus from His Followers, Recapturing God's Hope for His People* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009).

¹³³Ben Booker, “Rome and the Early Church: Lessons in Loving the Marginalized,” Break Point, June 20, 2013, accessed September 6, 2013, <http://www.breakpoint.org/tp-home/blog-archives/recent-point-posts/entry/4/22554>.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

As a matter of fact, the acceptance of the marginalized was a valued pillar of the early church.

The early church in its years of adolescent existence, understood the abandonment of the marginalized because it too, was considered different, and therefore stood in the shoes of marginalization. In the Apostolic Period in the region of Rome, Christians were charged with the crime of treason and were punished for regarding themselves as Christians. These early Christians were scrutinized misunderstandings and falsehood about their identity. In other words, the “factor of the unknown” made them an unwanted group that therefore suffer cruel acts towards them just because of who they were. The Roman Emperor Nero blames the Christians for the fire that devastated Rome. He was filled with so much bigotry that he used Christian bodies as candles to light his garden.

In the Age of Catholic Christianity, the early church had to endure harsh treatment from the Roman society, but they continued with the idea of treating others as they wanted to be treated. According to Celus, the Greek pagan philosopher and outspoken critic of Christianity, “their aim is to convince only worthless and contemptible people, idiots, slaves, poor women, and children... These are the only ones whom they manage to tune into believers.”¹³⁵ Celus’ narrow statement was certainly true, but the Christian attention was not just on the marginalized, but it was for anyone who wanted to be become followers of Christ. The act of including the social discarded was based on the premises of Christian love, the love for caring.¹³⁶ One of the key observations to why the early church included and affectionately accepted the marginalized is found in the word

¹³⁵Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 33.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 35.

used to describe the Christian in the New Testament period. The term *hagios*, which translated to the term saints, means holy ones, but the root suggests the term different. Because of the early church acceptance of the socially unacceptable and living as loyalist to Christ, the Romans deemed them as enemies of the human race.¹³⁷ During the Age of Reason and Revival, John Wesley, the 18th century theologian and one of the co-founders of the Methodist Church, supported the idea of love, the love to God and neighbor.¹³⁸

By 66 C.E. the Jews have become dissatisfied with Rome and tension between the two factions became increasingly distraught. In a feeble attempt the priests attempted to extinguish a revolt, even calling upon the Pharisees to assist. After the desecrating of a synagogue in Caesarea, and the suspension of tribute payments, which started great Roman contempt for the Jews and the Great Jewish Revolt began. The temple of Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews stood as one of the largest marginalized groups in history. The conflict between the Jews and the Christians continued well into the 4th century. This persecution was largely contributed to the retaliative statements by the church fathers based upon the charge of the Jews mistreatment of Christians. Both sides of this saga seemed to have worn the stigma of being the marginalized.

Christianity was legalized in 313 and this religious movement became the close ally of the Roman emperors. Thus in 321 Constantine promulgated the earliest law recorded in a compilation of the laws of the Roman Empire under the Christian emperors called the Codex Theodosianus. This law was regarding dealing with the Jews. This was the early process of reducing their privileges and immunities. In this first law there is

¹³⁷Ibid., 39.

¹³⁸Ibid., 334.

evidence of that hatred which would change the role of the Jew from one of privileged citizenship in the Roman Empire to that of outcast.¹³⁹

The plight of the marginalization of the Jews continued through time and one of the greatest acts against them came during the tragic holocaust. The Holocaust was the state sponsored, systematized persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime. The term holocaust is a word that pertains Greek origin of its meaning sacrifice by fire. The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were the superior race and that the Jews were inferior, and that they proposed an alien threat to the so-called German racial community. Unfortunately, the Jews were not the only group that faced marginalization during of this atrophic movement because of their so-called dissimilarities. The holocaust targeted the disabled and persons with opposing political, ideological, and behaviors.¹⁴⁰

Differences in religious beliefs are not the only reason that persons or groups of people have been marginalized that ultimately results in abandonment and or alienation. Throughout history there have been other factors that attribute to abandonment. Gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic status are just to name a few. Strangely enough, the some sacred communities have joined in and devised margins that exclude those that don't fit their idea of one who should be included in their ranks.

In regards to gender, historically women have been treated more as property rather than equal partners on life. The sacred has practice for years the principles of inequality. The premise of this thought uses bible references such as Genesis 3:16, where

¹³⁹James Everette Seaver, "Humanistic Studies: The Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire (300-428)" (diss., University of Kansas, 1952), 6.

¹⁴⁰"Holocaust Encyclopedia," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified June 10, 2013, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>.

the narrator writes that a woman would be ruled by a man as punishment of their disobedience to Divine command. This thought came as a result of sin, and therefore, because the sacred is not predicated by sin, then this rule is null and void. The Pauline epistles use such language such as women are not allowed to speak in worship services, they are not allowed to teach or hold places of authority,¹⁴¹ and they are to be subjected to their male counterparts.¹⁴² Paul does also mention in the book of Galatians that there is no difference of status in Christ between man and woman. He writes that there is neither male nor female: for all are one in Christ Jesus.¹⁴³ Women have been alienated for a great period of time. Women have been socially inferior. In this country that was founded upon the premise of freedom, women have had to live as second or lower class individuals. The Church father, and founder of Western Theology, Tertullian proposed a misogynistic view towards women that attribute to their classification as the marginalized when he said,

In pain shall you bring forth children, woman, and you shall turn to your husband and he shall rule over you. And do you not know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It was you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. With what ease you shattered that image of God: Man! Because of the death you merited, even the Son of God had to die. . . . Woman, you are the gate to hell.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹Ibid., 1 Tm 2:12.

¹⁴²Ibid., Ti 2:3-5.

¹⁴³J. I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, and William White Jr., eds., *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 422.

¹⁴⁴Jon Huckins, "Women in the Early Church: The Devil's Gateway?," September 17, 2013, accessed September 17, 2013, <http://jonhuckins.net/missionalivingandadvocacy/women-in-the-early-church-the-devils-gateway/>.

To close the focus of the alienation of women from a general viewpoint to a more precise, the focus of the plight of the abandonment and alienation of the African-American woman has been more harmful than any other race of women in this country. African-American women were faced with both the misogynistic treatment from both White America and the African-American male. This form of treatment certainly falls in line with the issues of abandonment. An article written in *Psychology Today* states that some of the symptoms of abandonment include the feeling of being inadequate, disapproved, unable to accomplish, or worst of all, sub-human.¹⁴⁵ In Alice Walker's book, *The Color Purple*, she give a glimpse into a small window to what African-American women had to deal with in her only family in how they were mistreated. The character, "Sofia Butler" has been beaten by her husband Harpo, and she tells the lead character Celie,

All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me.¹⁴⁶

African-American women have been mistreated by society and in their homes, and unfortunately, history reveals that they have been alienated even in a place where the theme of liberation and love is supposed to be a vital part of its existence, the church. James Henry Harris, professor of homiletics at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond Virginia, wrote in his book entitled *Pastoral Theology: A Black Perspective*,

¹⁴⁵Claudia Black, "The Many Faces of Addiction: Understanding the Pain of Abandonment," *Psychology Today*, June 4, 2010, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-many-faces-addiction/201006/understanding-the-pain-abandonment> (accessed April 18, 2013).

¹⁴⁶Walker, *The Color Purple*.

Sexism against Black women should also be addressed by Black theology and the Black church. Women in Black churches outnumber men by more than two to one; yet in positions of authority and responsibility the ratio is reversed. Though women are gradually entering ministry as bishops, pastors, deacons and elders, many men and women still resist and fear that development. When our church licensed a woman to the preaching ministry over a decade ago, almost all the male deacons and many women members opposed the action by appealing to tradition and selected scripture passages. Black theology and the Black church must deal with the double bondage of Black women in church and society.¹⁴⁷

The misogynistic treatment from white slave masters migrated into the minds of the historical African-American church where these women, who statically make up the majority, are treated indifferently. Their roles in the church were limited to menial duties that were similar to what was expected from them in their homes. There were to be silent in leadership but were expected to contribute more of themselves. The African-American church used the idealism of their White counterparts and the misinterpretation of biblical scriptures. The early White church of this country used scriptures to justify sub-human treatment of the African-American race and unfortunately, some of the same tactics justified the mistreatment of African-American women. Some of the strange beliefs were included ideas that women were not supposed to preach, hold leadership positions, or not even allowed to enter upon the sacred platform of the pulpit.

Double standards were proudly practiced in the sacred community of the church, whereby the punishment or acknowledgements of wrongdoings of the men were different from that of the women. Case in point, when an unmarried woman became pregnant, she was considered a shame to her and her family. There was not much said about the male contributor to the pregnancy. Even the child that was born out of these premarital conceptions was stigmatized with such titles as mistakes or bastards. These children lived their lives in the church with a cloud of shame that continuously hovered over their

¹⁴⁷Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black-Church Perspective*, 66.

heads. These demeaning attitudes birth another generation of abandonment issues.

Women have been alienated for centuries by a male dominated society to the point that even when they are mistreated and physically or sexually harmed that some of them place the blame of their attack upon themselves. Some of these emotional scars have led to desperate measures such as drug usage, self-mutilation, depression, low self worth, and at worst, suicide.

The other most known group that lived as an outcast, were African-Americans. In 1619, the first African slaves were brought to the colony of Jamestown Virginia. African-American slaves helped build the economic foundations of the new nation by serving as cheap labor. In 1787 slavery was made legal in the Northwest Territory and the United States Constitution stated that Congress could not ban slave trade, not until 1808. Slavery used African men for laborious tasks in farming and construction. African women worked as field hands, maids, and cooks. Many of the female slaves served as wet nurses for their white slave owners. There were also times when the white slave owners required sexual acts from the female slaves.

Slaves lived separately from their white owners. Slaves were treated as if they were nothing more than farm animals. Those slaves who violated the place during this time in history were subjected to harsh and cruel treatment such as severe beatings, sold to other slave owners, mutilated, or even killed. Slaves of this country were not considered citizens to this country, only property. In 1868, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified. This amendment allowed person born in the United States, including those children born of slaves, as legalized citizens.

In 1886, a monumental case by the Supreme Court known as *Plessey versus Ferguson* reinforced alienation of a people. This case upheld the notion of separate but equal. This meant that African Americans had to ride on separate transportation, sleep in different quarters, eat in separate facilities, and attend separate schools. One justice, John Marshall Harlan, disagreed with the ruling and argued that separating Blacks from whites (called segregation) in public facilities created inequality and marked one race as inferior to another. After hearing arguments by NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall, the Supreme Court reversed the *Plessey* decision on May 17, 1954. In *Brown v. the Board of Education*, a unanimous court agreed with what Justice Harlan had said fifty years ago, that segregation was unconstitutional.¹⁴⁸

In the years following slavery, a movement of equality evolved called the Civil Right Movement. This was a pursuit of a people who still sought equality. Even years after slavery was abolished, African Americans were at the same time ostracized from what America calls life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They were overlooked for jobs, housings, benefits from financial institutions, and other necessities of life. Even though some betterment came into being, stereotypical innuendoes are still used as means of alienating this marginalized group. J. R. Rice asserts in in his piece *Abandonment Issues and the Psychology of Human Behaviors* of so-called reasons of alienation during the Civil Rights movement of African-Americans. They included such things as:

- What the Bible says
- You are 3/5 of a man

¹⁴⁸“Plessey vs. Ferguson” America's Story From America's Library, accessed April 1, 2013. http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/progress/jb_progress_plessey_1.html.

- You are not smart enough
- You came from an ape¹⁴⁹

Brigham Young, former president of the Mormon Church stated that African slaves did not possess a soul and therefore could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. African slaves, as he stated were a result of the curse of Ham. Young was not the only church official that carried similar views when it came to religion and slavery. White America during the time of slavery and many years beyond tried to keep African Americans from developing a mentality of worship. Dr. Bertrand Comparat, whose book *The Bible Commands Segregation*, attempts to justify the premise of his book by identifying passages within the bible that supports his claim. He speaks of Leviticus 20:24; "I am the Lord thy God, which have separated you from other people."¹⁵⁰

The late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that the most segregated hour in Christian America is 11:00 A.M. on Sunday mornings. Time old and new still present a pattern of alienation for African Americans due to their physical and cultural characteristics. James Cone, in his book *God of the Oppressed*, writes that Jesus of the Bible stands a notion that all have dignity and worth.¹⁵¹ Cone deals with the plight of the African-Americans in searching and believing in this liberating Divine.

Other voices that are forced to silence because of their lack of commonality are members of the homosexual community. Terry Brown states, to be gay is, consequently,

¹⁴⁹J. R. Rice, "Abandonment Issues and the Psychology of Human Behavior," It's All About Abandonment, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://www.itsallaboutabandonment.com>.

¹⁵⁰"The Most Segregated Hour in the United States," Our daily Thread, accessed April 2, 2013, <http://www.ourdailthread.org/content/most-segregated-hour-united-states>.

¹⁵¹James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, Revised ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

to feel alienated in many ways within a dominant hetero-patriarchal system that dictates the thoughts and practices of the prevailing socio-political and economical order.¹⁵²

There are some churches that have developed the idea that gay and lesbian lifestyles in something that just started over the last few decades, but homosexual activities have existed thousands of years, and have placed a divine sanction against these persons. This unfortunate attitude has caused many in the homosexual community to be abandoned by the sacred community. The sacred has used the Bible as their source of reasoning on its beliefs. In the Old Testament book of Leviticus, there is a section of Holiness Codes that instructs the Israelites on how they were to conduct themselves upon entering the Promised Land. The term abomination in this text derives from the Hebrew term *tô'ēbâ*,¹⁵³ which means practicing occult activities. This prohibition was not the only one mentioned in the Holiness Codes. Others prohibitions that if violated were unacceptable included crossbreeding of animals, sowing two kinds of seed in one field, wearing garments made of two different fabrics, rounding off hair of one's temple, receiving a tattoo are some of the others. There are texts, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament that pertain to homosexuality. There was no word in ancient Greek that corresponds to the term homosexuality. The closest terms in the Greek were *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*¹⁵⁴ that mean soft people or men who go to bed, respectfully. It is

¹⁵²Terry Brown, ed., *Other Voices, Other Worlds: the Global Church Speaks Out On Homosexuality* (New York, NY: Church Publishing Inc., 2006).

¹⁵³Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2000), 246-247.

¹⁵⁴Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 883.

perceived that the previous idolatress inhabitants of the land performed some of these same practices.¹⁵⁵

In times past, both the secular and the sacred agreed that this lifestyle was a complete abomination. In more present times, the secular community seems to have to soften its views on homosexuality. Some churches have un-muddied the waters, or have invoked a disruption. James Henry Harris, in his book *The Word Made Plain*, calls disruption a blessing because it fosters self-examination and change.¹⁵⁶ Still there are those sacred institutions that continue homophobia and heterosexism preached from the pulpit and approved from the pews.¹⁵⁷

As it was in the support of subordination of women, and slavery, biblical scripture has been used substantiate person ideas. Biased eyes often turn to the biblical witness in support of the bias attitude, particularly when communities attempt to justify their oppression of other human beings.¹⁵⁸ There is an enemy within that produces alienation and abandonment of homosexuals. Instead of the sacred community having out a welcome sign, it has put up a do not enter sign because of its misconceptions. If God's revelation in the biblical Jesus draws us the sacred community to hear the voices of those who are marginalized in society, the sacred community is drawn to hear the voices of the homosexual community as they struggle with homophobia, that procreate alienation and

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶James Henry Harris, *The Word Made Plain: the Power and Promise of Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004), 19.

¹⁵⁷Horace L. Griffin, *Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010).

¹⁵⁸Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: a Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 90.

abandonment.¹⁵⁹ Victor Anderson contributes this thought in the book *Readers' Guide To Lesbian and Gay Studies* that the church continues to promote the alienated attacks of homophobia that keep Black gays and lesbians silent. Another reason that both the sacred and secular communities reject the homosexual lifestyle is because of the misunderstanding and fear of HIV/AIDS, which plague African-American neighborhoods at a disproportionate rate.¹⁶⁰ The mindset is that this tragic disease is a homosexual problem that is a result of their sinful lifestyle. Kelly Brown Douglas sheds a ray of enlightenment on this behavior in her book, *What's Faith got To Do With It?* When she notes that Christians interpret the sufferings of *others* as a way of God dealing with God's enemies.¹⁶¹ In accordance with the Center of Disease Control (CDC) 25% of all reported HIV cases are through heterosexual contact. In 2010 this equated to over 8000 reported cases in the African-American community.¹⁶²

Many churches carry the motto that was formulated during the Clinton administration in 1993, says about gays in the military of don't ask, don't tell. The homophobic call homosexuality a sin, and this is why it is not accepted. When the church decides to close its doors to ALL who have sinned, Sunday mornings will become very quiet.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 127.

¹⁶⁰Danielle N. Hester, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell' in the Black Church," *New York Times*, March 4, 2013, accessed May 18, 2011, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/ subjects/d/ dont_ask_dont_ tell/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/d/dont_ask_dont_tell/index.html).

¹⁶¹Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do with It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 46.

¹⁶²"Center of Disease Control," CDC, accessed May 10, 2013, <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics /statistics.html>.

Dr. Stanton Jones, professor of psychology and provost of Wheaton College gave a lecture at Dallas Theological Seminary about issues facing the church in the twenty-first century. He noted five failures in the church's treatment of sexuality in regards to the gay and lesbian communities that are bridging an ever-widening gap between the church and a group of people. They are:

1. The evangelical church has failed by treating homosexual persons, gay men and lesbian women, first and foremost as our bitter enemies.
2. Treating persons who identify as gay or lesbian as irredeemable.
3. An embarrassingly deficient representation of the richness of the Christian perspectives on human sexuality.
4. Pastoral care has failed to embrace but rather enticed alienation and have pushed these persons out of the church.
5. Failure to address these issues which then grudgingly allows airing of nontraditional perspectives.¹⁶³

Another important group that face issues of abandonment from both the sacred and secular communities is the younger generation. They are alienated due to the myopic standards of the sacred and secular communities. Their music, attire, and social habits have bridged a gap that appears to be widening rather than closing. In 1971, the late Soul balladeer Marvin Gaye released a song entitled, *What's Going On*.¹⁶⁴ In one of the stanzas, the lyrics state, "Mother, mother everybody thinks we are wrong, oh but who are they to judge us just because our hair is long... you've got to find a way to bring some understanding her today." The young people of this era were being criticized because of the differences and their refusal to conform to society's definition of normal. Society has

¹⁶³Stanton Jones, "5 Failures in the Church's Treatment of Sexuality and 5 Ways Forward," *DTS Magazine*, September 11, 2012, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www.dts.edu/read/5-failures-on-churchs-treatment-sexuality-5-ways-forward-jones-stanton/>.

¹⁶⁴Al Cleveland, *What's Going On*, performed by Marvin Gaye, Tamla Records, 1971.

for years stereotyped the youth of America because of their fads and lifestyles. Sadly enough it is that those that were once the accused becomes the complainant, and another generation is alienated.

In the church, the younger generation can visualize the bigotry that exists and they choose not to be a part of something where they feel unwanted. Historically, the youth in the church had limited opportunities. They could sing in the youth choir, serve with the youth users, or Sunday school. Their duties were basically to be cute, silent, and obedient. The church has lost its appeal to the younger generation. They will not just sit in and be treated as if they do not matter. Sermons that were being preached abandoned the younger audience and treated them as though whatever they did was wrong. Many church principles simply do not reflect the views of young Americans.

Time has introduced a plethora of identities. There were some that were accepted and there were others, who did not fit in, and they were treated as something strange, and because of their differences, they were considered less by the common majority. Alienation and abandonment is more of a method of not caring and a means of self-promotion by demoting the marginalized. The fear which the foreigners inspires, causes some to see something in them which calls into question their own role in society.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵Elie Wiesel, "The Foreigner in Each of Us," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 7, 1991, accessed April 4, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1991/0807/07232.html>.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Building a model of ministry in an attempt to move the minds of some in the church from exclusive to inclusive involved a culmination of planned and often tedious tasks. The entire effort had a dualistic purpose. First, this model was designed to convince those on one side of the coin that all persons should be treated equally regardless of their differences. Working with this group meant trying to reprogram their way of thinking of what is acceptable according to their traditions, and biblical understandings. On the other side of the coin, the victims of marginalization had to be reinforced that they were of worth in spite of being outside of the societal and sacred norm.

The issues within this context are caused by a fear of the unknown and misunderstood, and rather than facing these fears, some have decided to invoke false pretenses to minimize those whom they consider unacceptable, and disguise their own enormity as what is acceptable. In conclusion, this project, by closely examining the alienation and abandonment of the marginalized, shed new light on this controversial subject that has throughout history in both the secular and sacred communities, have emotionally and physically scarred scores of individuals simply because they were different.

In an effort of obtaining this information, a qualitative method of research was used. Research is the detailed study of a subject in order to obtain new information or understanding.¹ According to John Creswell's *Research and Design*, qualitative research provides a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem.² This model used tactics having some familiarity with those within the context. Because the focus of this research violated the thought process of many, it was necessary to use tactics of familiarity to complete this effort. Any other way of approaching individuals would have been similar to the military's assault method of "shock and awe." Therefore, three methods of obtaining data were formulated that possessed some form of connectivity with the context individuals. This triangulated included a class six-week class bookended by a pre and post survey. Secondly, because the context of study was a Bible belt, traditional rural African-American Baptist church, a series of sermons dealing with the subject of abandonment and exclusions were preached, with Q&A sessions following each sermon. The third leg of this triangulated method was the use of personal interviews pertaining to the participants understanding or belief on the inclusiveness or lack thereof within the context.

The class met on a scheduled night once per week for six weeks with planned topics of discussion. Creativity was used to obtain participation in this class.³ Incentives were offered in the form of refreshments, printed handouts, and the used of the electronic

¹Michael J. Polonsky, In *Designing And Managing a Research Project: A Business Student's Guide*, 3rd edition (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 4

²John W. Creswell, *Research and Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 4

³"Guidelines For Conducting A Focus Group," accessed May 5, 2014, http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf.

media of PowerPoint. This research method used information covered from the biblical studies, history, and literature. The participants were given a survey at the beginning of the class in an effort to measure their present ideology. At the end of the class, the participants were administered a post-survey to measure possible changes in their thought process. From the one who planned and taught the class, this was the most difficult of the three methods to perform. The level of defiance and steepness of traditional thought was difficult to break through. Those, whose minds were fixed in stone, hampered those who showed some plausibility. It is possible that this may not be a problem in every other context.

The next data collection tool utilized a common practice of the context, the use of sermons infused subliminally with identifying, understanding, and correcting the practice of marginalizing. A four-series collection of sermons were preached, and a Q&A session was conducted at the end of services with a select group of individuals who came out of the previous classes. From these sermons, four general questions were asked and discussed to gain an understanding of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the sermons in regards to change. The sermons exposed traditions and self conceived truths to be invalid notions when proper exegesis of the text was revealed. Two of the four sermons dealt with biblical narratives taught to the class. These two biblical narratives were derived from my assigned biblical foundational study, which included an Old Testament and a New Testament account. The Old Testament narrative was based upon the Genesis account of Hagar, a single Egyptian slave-woman, and her son Ishmael. The New Testament narrative came from the Markan Gospel account of the unnamed woman,

alienated because of an issue of blood which was a ceremonial Levitical law.⁴ Her condition made her unaccepted by the secular and sacred communities, or as Dr. Kelon Duke refers to as a social misfit.⁵ Collectively, the different biblical settings and sermonistic approaches direct the participants in the urgency of adhering to the divine mandate of respect and acceptance of those persons or groups outside the modernistic prescribed notion of normalcy.

The last aspect of the data collection puzzle used anonymous personal interviews. During these interviews, persons were asked open-ended questions regarding their understanding of who should be considered in the church, family, and community. The dialog between the interviewer and the interviewee were recorded in an effort to preserve the evidence collected from their discussions. Those persons who were interviewed volunteer for this part of the research journey. Many were reluctant to step forward, even though they were told that their identity would be held in strict confidence.

The triangulated method of data retrieval used for this study included the class with pre and post-test, the sermons with questions and answers session, and the personal interviews. The results of data collected will be discussed in Chapter Five: Field Experience.

⁴D. Smith, *Mark: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 123.

⁵Kelon Duke, "Nothing to Lose" (Video of sermon, Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, Glenwood IL, October 21, 2012), accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKD7lXQGPXk>.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

There has been an unfortunate occurrence in the local church that has become more prevalent in this postmodern generation. From the standpoint of this context of study, it has been noticed that the church is moving from an inclusive to an exclusive communal entity. Certain individuals are experiencing marginalization tactics towards them because of their differences. Such excluding practices are based upon a persons gender, sexual orientation, class, socio-economic conditions, education, and other forms of classification. The efforts of this work dealt with the church's response to single women with children, and how the church segregates these persons. These people have possessed a desire to worship and serve a true and living God. These persons, who differ from what the local church defines as normal, believes that God loves all, and that they too can be a part of a place of worship.

The aim of this project was to investigate the rationale of the bigotries against persons that the societal and sacred communities regard as contradistinctive because of their race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. The results of the investigative findings were used to surmise a general conclusion behind these issues, and the results were used to formulate a theoretical agent to assist in the possible eradication of bigotries towards the marginalized. Specifically, this project looked at how the sacred community has redefined what and who is acceptable and unacceptable. The efforts of this project

showed how misinterpreted views have been formulated by means of biblical scripture, forgotten principles of Christianity, and the historical elements that propagate prejudices towards persons based upon gender, race, age, and sexual orientation. These issues are caused by a fear of the unknown and misunderstood, and rather than facing these fears, some have decided to invoke false pretense to minimize what they consider unacceptable, and disguise their own enormity as what is acceptable. In conclusion, this project, by closely examining the alienation and abandonment of the marginalized, shed new light on this controversial subject that has throughout history in both the secular and sacred communities, have emotionally and physically scarred scores of individuals simply because they were different.

To build anything, you must start with a solid foundation and a competent team of participants to complete the effort. One of the first things done was to select team members or contextual associates that aided in the model building process. Persons were chosen based on their giftedness in certain areas. When building anything, you need team members who are distinctively gifted. Therefore, the team of contextual associates was made up of teachers, counselors, social workers, writing experts, and ministers. One of the first things that this coalition of minds did when we came together was to determine and develop a blueprint for providing the desired outcome for this project. Each member provided input in an effort gain the maximum potential of effectiveness.

There were two meetings with the team prior to starting classes with the context. Exerts from the biblical, historical, theological, and theoretical foundational research was shared to assure that the team was unified on the scope of the project. The first introduction was an Old Testament and New Testament pericope that portrayed definite

acts of marginalization and abandonment. The Old Testament narrative was about the Egyptian slave Hagar and her son Ishmael. This text shows how this woman and her child who were once accepted, and later outcast when they were no longer deemed acceptable by the biblical patriarch, Abraham. Abraham's wife was barren, and she, in spite of a divine promise of her conceiving and giving birth to a child, decided to take matters into her own hands, and used Hagar to serve as a surrogate. When Sarah gave birth to a child of her own, she decided that her natural child should be entitled to the position of heir to his father's estate. Therefore, she demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be outcast from their camp. This narrative posed similarities to that of the issues found in the context and within my life's journey.

The New Testament pericope dealt with the gospel narrative of the woman with the issue of blood. This narrative shows how society and the sacred community deemed this woman a misfit because of an uncontrollable medical issue. Her marginalization was based upon the adherence of a Levitical Law, which considered her illness as a sign of being unclean. Her labeled uncleanness made her unacceptable in public and family circles. Because of the longevity of her illness, she unfortunately experienced financial straights as a result of seeking a physician that could assist her towards a cure. Her final attempt for relief came by taking a chance and exercising a mixture of faith and superstition by touching the bottom fringe of the clothes of Jesus. The narrative states that this woman's body was cured and Jesus declared her as a daughter, which reestablished her acceptance. This biblical narrative also exposed how persons can be marginalized by means beyond their control, but it also showed that the Christian church should follow the characteristics of its central deity Jesus, to accept the unacceptable.

Historically, this was unwarranted mistreatment of others whose difference has been a practice by many cultures for centuries. Mass opinions, perceptions, and cultural attitudes sometimes morph into the masses thinking negatively. According to German theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, by judging others, we blind ourselves to our own evil perceptions and deny grace to those with differences who are entitled just as we are.¹

These differences have caused persons to be abandoned and alienated by the secular and sacred community. Wayne Oates writes in *The Conditions of Alienation and Abandonment*:

Abandonment and alienation are related to each other. Ordinarily, alienation follows some sort of abandonment of people, an estrangement, a leaving. An alien is a foreigner, someone who does not belong. People can become "foreigners," strangers to each other, even if they are blood kin to each other. Webster's Dictionary defines being alienated as "inimical or indifferent whereas a former attachment subsided." The conditions of abandonment and alienation in the flux of human relationships today leave people estranged from each other, isolated strangers who yearn for a home, a sense of belonging, a community of shared faith.²

Alienation is an integral part of the human condition. It spares no, age, gender, race, culture, socio-economic level, or time in history.³ It is expressed in senseless acts of violence, thwarted self-realization, family breakdown, impersonalization, and dehumanization, whose root issue is control.⁴ Alienation and abandonment deteriorates

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 185.

²Wayne Oates, "The Conditions of Alienation and Abandonment," *Review and Expositor*, no. 89 (1992): 321.

³Bobby B. Cunningham, "The Healing Work of Forgiving: A Pastoral Care Response to Alienation and Abandonment," *Review and Expositor* (1992): 89.

⁴William C. Bier, *Alienation: Plight of Modern Man?* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1972), 35-37.

the human soul and interferes with hope, security, belonging, love, and values and virtues of human integrity and growth.⁵ Abandonment causes feelings of being left outside or intentionally or emotionally discarded.⁶

Theologically and theoretically, the project shared what ancient and modern theologians say about the issue of marginalization and abandonment of women and children in correlation with the biblical narratives. It was amazing, because some of the theologians were accepting of the marginalized treatment, especially with regard to Hagar and Ismael. Modern thinkers seem to have a more lenient slant towards this mistreatment. The theologian's perspectives were based upon their theological lens. Some white theologians saw things differently than those theologians of color. Theoretically, the social sciences point out the detrimental outcomes of persons who are on the receiving end of this unfair treatment. Theses investigators point out how prominent and dangerous this unfair treatment can be for persons of various ages, genders, cultures, socioeconomic, and sexual orientation.

All of the teaching methods were ideas derived from this group and myself. This blueprint included three qualitative methodologies as data collection tools. These three methodologies were triangulated to identify the common threads of data. The three methods decided by this team were:

1. A class discussing the praxis of marginalization. The means of achieving significant data for this study will include a class, with the use of historical and biblical research that proves and or disproves the notions of alienation and

⁵Ibid., 373.

⁶J. Ray Rice, *Thank You for Loving Me! The Psychology of Abandonment, Healing, and Loving* (Scotts Valley, CA: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2009), 11.

abandonment bookended by the administering pre and post assessments with various persons that fit the description of contradistinctive.

2. A subject-series of four sermons pertaining to the subject of marginalization and abandonment were preached with a Q & A session following each of the sermons.
3. Personal interviews whereby individuals were asked a series of questions revolving around the issues possibly experienced as a result of being marginalized due to them not fitting the normalcy considered by the church.

After the informational meeting with the contextual research team and the development of the agreed lesson plans, the announcements went forth about the first of the three data collection tools, that of the class. Before the commencement of the class, a pre-survey was administered. The results of the pre-survey were juxtaposed with the post-survey that was administered at the conclusion of the class. The results of the pre-survey, taken by sixty individuals, revealed remarkable ideology that further supports the need for this type of ministry model. The questions of the survey included:

1. Do you believe that God is a male? Surprisingly, 96% believed that God is a male.
2. Do you believe that women should have a value of importance in the church? Of this question only 62% believed that women possessed a value of importance within the church.
3. Should the church embrace single mothers and their children? Only 30% of those who participated in this survey believed that the church should embrace single mothers and their children.
4. Do you believe that children born of a single mother are acceptable by God? This question split the mindset of this group; only 57% believed that children born of a single mother are acceptable by God.
5. Should the church dedicate children born to single mothers? This question revealed a generalized concept of this context; 23% of those who took this survey believed that it was acceptable for children of a single mother could be dedicated to the Lord.

The next set of questions identified the possible reasoning behind the prior answers. These questions included:

1. Do you attend church worship services on a regular bases? 76% of these individuals indicated that they attend church on a regular bases.
2. Do you attend bible study and or Sunday school on a regular bases? Of the 76% who attend worship services, only 24% of these persons said that they attend these various forms of Christian education.

Lastly, the demographics of these persons who took this survey included marital status with children, family size, age, and employment status. The following tables reveal the results.

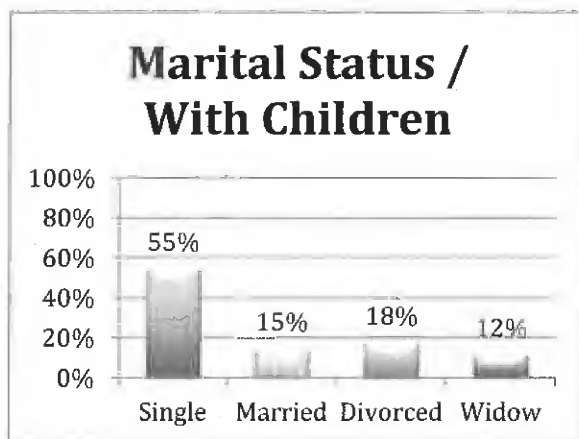


Table 1

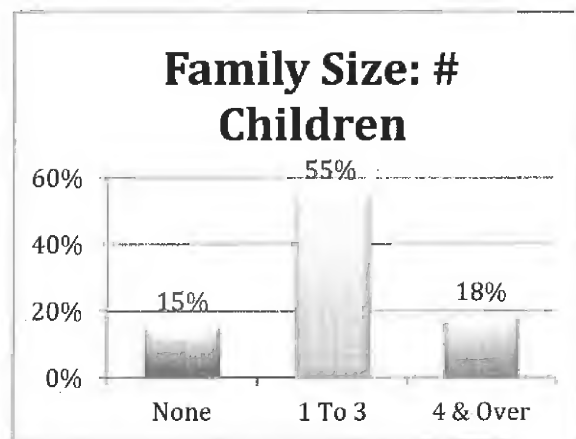


Table 2

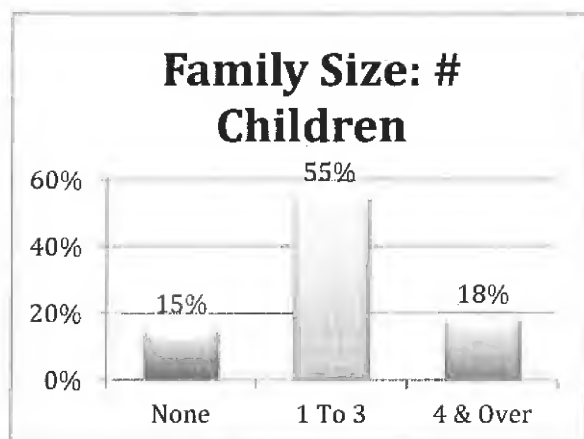


Table 3

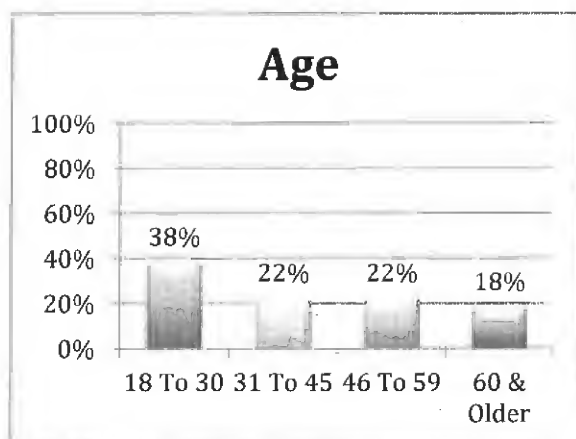


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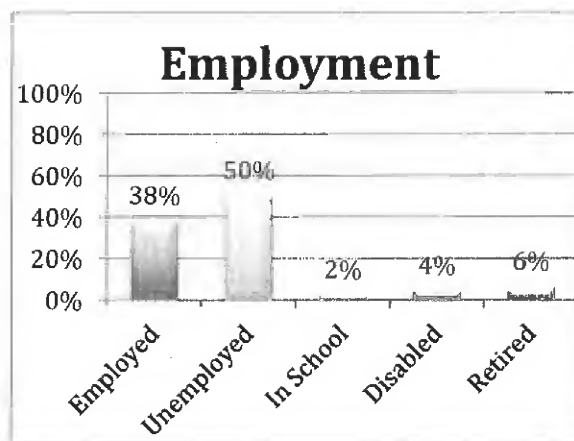


Table 5

After the completion of the pre-survey, the class lessons were administered. The first lesson dealt with defining the terms of marginalization and abandonment from a secular, social science, and a biblical standpoint. Secularly, marginalization is defined as a method of keeping someone or a group in degrading and powerless position within a society or group.⁷ Dr. Iris M. Young, in her article “Five Faces of Oppression” says, marginalization is the act of confining a group or person to a lower social standing or outer limit or edge of society.⁸ Biblically, it was a form of separating the weaker or less fortunate groups. This practice was generally used as well to disconnect persons with certain medical issues from the rest of the community.

The class consisted of weekly lessons pointing out biblical reasoning on the subject of marginalization.

⁷Merriam-Webster, “Marginalization,” accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caste>.

⁸Lisa M. Heidke and Peg Connor, *Five Faces of Oppression: Oppression, Privilege, and Resistance* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 37.

- Week I – Pre-survey & Defining Marginalization
- Week II – Subgroups: Women, The Poor, Sinners, Sick, & Gentiles
- Week III – Where Do Women Fit In With God?
- Week IV – The Biblical Narrative of Hagar & Ishmael
- Week V – The Biblical Narrative of the Woman With the Issue of Blood
- Week VI – Summary and Post-survey

The class was met with some open mindedness, while others refused to bend from the strong biblical interwoven traditional beliefs. Male resistance was expected but ironically, the strongest fight of resistance came from a large portion of the female attendees. During Week II, the debate was raised whether God was a male figure. When it was explained that the Bible was written in a masculine favored slant, some of these women could grasp that idea, especially after reviewing John 4:24 which refers to God being a spirit. Some of these women still could not get past the pronoun usage of the word him. These are the same women who partially believed in other biblical references in regards of women in the church. The reason partially was suggested is because they adhered to some of the male dominant pericopes, but others that dictated their conduct in church was overlooked. When the biblical texts were properly explained, some of the participants mentioned at the close of the classes that they had never looked at the text in that manner.

At the conclusion of the six-week class, a post-survey was administered. The results implied significant positive change, while other indicators registered very little change. The same battery of questions was given at the post-survey. They are:

1. Do you believe that God is a male? Pre-Survey 96% believed that God is a male. The post-survey showed that now only 22% believed that God was a male. This was a difference of 74%.
2. Do you believe that women should have a value of importance in the church? Of this question only 62% believed that women possessed a value of importance within the church. There was only an 8% increase that women were valued in the church.
3. Should the church embrace single mothers and their children? Only 30% of those who participated in this survey believed that the church should embrace single mothers and their children. The post survey show a major leap to 75% seeing single mothers accepted by the church.
4. Do you believe that children born of a single mother are acceptable by God? This question split the mindset of this group; only 57% believed that children born of a single mother are acceptable by God. The post-survey results indicate that 78% believe that these children are Godly acceptable.
5. Should the church dedicate children born to single mothers? This question revealed a generalized concept of this context; 23% of those who took this survey believed that it was acceptable for children of a single mother could be dedicated to the Lord. Post-survey results show a positive increase of 55%.

Overall, the results of the post-survey show positive awareness of the sacred community acting in an inclusive manner. The issue of single women with children is still a delicate subject. After the class and the surveys, it still appears that the older members remain in their traditional mindsets.

The second data collection tool used was the series of sermons with the theme of marginalization and abandonment. Each sermon was followed by a brief Q&A session. This also proved to be difficult, because to collect this data required keeping persons over after morning services were complete. The context associate teams suggested refreshments for those who decided to stay. This group of dedicated individuals collapsed to four. This was a major decline from the large class that was held prior to this section. These persons endured the entire four sessions that it took to succeed on this task. Other

groups who use this method may find better attendance on another scheduled day, however, that the sooner the questions are asked, the fresher the sermon is in the minds of the participants.

The four sermons were:

1. From Left Out To Right In—Galatians 4: 1 - 7 NRSV

Text: My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Thesis: The Apostle Paul uses a metaphor of an adolescent who has the promise of acceptance, but now is no more than a slave. There is a transition that takes place that moves this former slaved, who because of the Son of God makes one that was left out, now right in... into the adoption of God’s family.

These persons are no longer excluded, but now included.

2. Love Don’t Live Here Anymore—Genesis 21: 9 & 10 NRSV

Text: But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.”

Thesis: This epic saga is of a single mother and her child who experienced the brevity of love, and quickly be here one minute and gone the next. It show one could be accepted and in a short period of time then be cast away. But one man’s cast away is God’s bringing in.

3. Acceptance From the Unacceptable – John 4: 7-9 & 27a NRSV

Text: A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman...

Thesis: This pericope deals with a woman with double jeopardy; she is a Samaritan, unaccepted by Jews; a single woman with numerous male partners, unaccepted by the other female Samaritans. Even with what she had against her, Jesus took time to reach out to her, not as a man, nor as a Jew, but as a Savior. She in turn accepts Jesus, and Jesus accepts her.

4. Not Fit To Fit In – Mark 5: 25 – 28 NRSV

Text: Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, or she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.”

Thesis: A woman who had been labeled with the stigma of being unfit for the social, sacred, and family circles by religious laws of practice, breaks the law and is found to be innocently included by Jesus.

From these four sermons, the contextual associates’ team developed a group of questions. The same questions were used for each sermon in an effort to effective comparisons. The four questions were:

1. Who do you think was the victim in this sermon, and how were they affected by acts of marginalization?
2. How did this sermon impact the way of your thinking?
3. Do you think that gender plays a role in the marginalization treatment in this sermon?

4. If this event were to happen today, how would the church respond?

This group of four individuals answered the questions separately. When all were completed, the answers were discussed. The results showed that all four participants answered each question in similar manners for each sermon. The common threads drawn from the answers indicated that people who have experienced victimizing practices of marginalization and abandonment are more understanding to others who suffer similarly due to their personal view or differences. These individuals were also very critical towards the local church for failing them, while a few believe that the church may reach out to them. They look for the church to be a safe haven, when it actually turned out to be the place where they were least accepted. Those persons who stick to their religious traditions have some flexibility towards victims of marginalization. It appears they think that it is the fault of the victim that they suffer with their differences.

The last leg of the triangulated table used for data collection was personal interviews. As this process transpired, it became difficult to find individuals to participate with the process. Three persons were interviewed with varying ages, education, and socio-economic standings. These volunteers were asked similar questions. Some of their comments led to insights that helped further in collecting data for this process. The team suggested that familiar faces should interview these persons, hoping that this would allow them to be more opened with their answers. These interviews were recorded and the contents were transcribed for further discussion with the contextual associates' team. Those persons who volunteered for these interviews consisted of a single mother who had her first child while in high school. The second participant was a fifty-five-year-old

married woman with two children, and the last participant was twenty-two-year-old single mother with one child.

The highlight from the first interview included that she thought that because she was a single mother, that she was being judged by some of the church members. Because of this feeling, she stopped attending church on a regular bases. She felt as though her family supported her during her pregnancy and since giving birth. She did not have the same sentiments with her community. She mentions how neighbors made discouraging remarks about her and her child. The last question that was asked to each interviewee was, did they love their children in spite of all that they went through. Each one of them said, yes!

Interviewee two was currently married with two children. Her first child was born before she and her husband were married. She said that at the time of pregnancy with her first child, her family, and the church looked upon her negatively. Recalled that from the time she found out that she was pregnant until after the child was several months old, she did not attend church, and she secluded herself from everyone else. Today she is married to the father of her second child. She attends church on a regular bases without her husband. The question was asked, was there a difference between the way her church treated her some thirty years ago, and the way that her local church responds to single women with children today. Her answer was absolutely not. She noted that her pastor embraces all children regardless of their family makeup, but others in the church frown upon this. She recalls a heated discussion between her pastor and one of the deacons, when the pastor dedicated a child of a single mother. The pastor told the deacon that the child did not have anything to do with how they came into the world, so why should the

child be punished. He also said that if the church would stop helping those persons who have sinned, then the doors needed to be shut. She recalled an article that she recently read about a prominent pastor who refused to bless babies born to unwed mothers. She said that these are the types of occurrences are keeping this younger generation from coming to church. She was asked, did she believe that her local church was inclusive or exclusive; her reply was definitely exclusive.

The 3rd and final interviewee was the most intriguing. She was a twenty-two-year old single mother with one child. She was asked, how the church viewed her as a single mother? Her response was, “As a single mother, I feel like I am viewed in a church as not worthy enough to go forth and do anything in the church pertaining to teenage women in church. As far as being a role model in the church, I’m not worthy enough is their aspect.” She goes on to say that when she first conceived, her family considered her a failure. In regards to how society viewed her, she replied, she was stigmatized or just another statistic. The interviewee was asked questions in reference to her child being negatively labeled or treated differently. Her response was, “Her grandmother said she was a little devil. I had a friend that said she was going to be the devil, because she was born this way. She was kind of outcast in a way.” Interviewee three was then asked how she thought God viewed the situation with her and her child? She noted, “At first, when you’ve had so much criticism I did feel that God viewed me as a failure, but it wasn’t until I really got in church, did it with different prayer warriors and prophetesses, and we would pray and God would speak through them to me. It was like I feel like God views me—sometimes you can feel that he views you as a failure, but the more and more—the closer I got to God, the more I knew he loved me for me and that he wants the best for

me. He's going to provide the best for me. I say that God sees me as his child and he loves me and he loves my daughter. Although, she didn't come from the best.”

From these three interviews, some common threads that are revealed included exclusion from the sacred community, some abandonment issues by families, social degrading, and a feeling of low self-esteem. At some point, there was a feeling of unworthiness to God. There are also significant signs of ill treatment towards children born to single mothers.

The data was collected and discussed with the contextual associates’ team. Highlights of this data were also shared with the professional associates who served as the architects in assisting in the designing of this ministry model. The professional team is made up of a Ph.D. who shared their professional experiences of how marginalization affects the education process. The second had a D.Min. degree, shared a pastoral point of view of church leadership in handling the marginalized and the oppressed in the congregation and community. The third was another Ph.D. that gave advice on transformational strategies for the proposed contextual project of eradicating marginalized and oppressive practices. The final team professional member was a Ph.D. who served as the quality-control agent to lend her expertise towards the final ministry model.

The outcome of all of the collected data has revealed patterns of congruency with the hypothesis stated earlier in this chapter. These issues are caused by a fear of the unknown and misunderstood, and rather than facing these fears, some have decided to invoke false pretenses to minimize what they consider unacceptable and disguise their own enormity as what is acceptable. Evidence derived from the collected data reveals that

one of the biggest contributors in the practice of marginalization is the misinterpretation of scripture. Biblical narratives have been taken totally out of context and these so-called ideologies have been morphed with traditions and social values. Women of color have had to deal with issues of marginalization and abandonment for centuries, and today, these sisters whose skin has been kissed by the sun still face similar issues in the postmodern church. This vial treatment against women and their children has been wrongly accused and penalized by the church, family, and society. These sisters have had to endure the wilderness of life similar to that of the biblical character Hagar, a sister of color, whom when she was no longer fit to be a part of the community was cast aside with her child. There was no room for her, and only meager provisions were given.

The African-American community has taken Hagar's story unto itself. Hagar has “spoken” to generation after generation of Black women because her story has been validated as true by suffering Black people. She and Ishmael together, as family, model many Black American families in which a lone woman/ mother struggles to hold the family together in spite of the poverty to which the ruling class economics consign it. Hagar, like many Black women, goes into the world to make a living for herself and her child, with only God by her side.⁹ The postmodern church, led by traditional mindsets, has cast away many young women and their children because they are not welcomed in this so-called sacred community. There have been women who felt that even God was against them. Imaginably so, when people refer to their children as devils or that they are unworthy to be dedicated to the Lord.

⁹Delores Williams, *Hagars' Story: A Route To Black Women's Issues.* "In *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-talk* (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books: 2013), 17.

With what data has been collected, there are several venues that can be taken to build a ministry model that can assist these persons who have been affected by this negative and demeaning practice of marginalization and abandonment. First of all, proper biblical teaching is a mandate. There needs to be a defining moment of who God is and how God relates to all people. The church needs to shift back to its previous landmarks of love, because love covers a multitude of sins. The church should provide counseling for these single mothers and their children who suffer in silence.

Lastly, this context of study did not fully grasp the idea that everyone can come to church. Traditions are so deeply rooted that only time can uproot. The positive side of the picture is that some, maybe not all, but some changed. It is the prayer of some that this new ideology will spread among others and eventually the spots and wrinkles will vanish, and the trueness of God shall be revealed unto all regardless of gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, socio-economic, or any other barrier of separation.

Chapter six will bring all of this information together with a reflection, summary, and a final conclusion.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

The previous chapter dealt with the tools and the results of this Doctor of Ministry project. This chapter summates the entire work and the experience of the process. The strategic scheme of this project was to skillfully select highlights of my spiritual life, and my present context to synergize a common thread that would form a single garment of guidance for the betterment of those who walk on a similar journey of marginalization and abandonment. The ideology of this ministry model was to shed light on this particular subject to eradicate the stereotypical falsehoods of some, and to eradicate the low self-esteem of those others who were affected.

One such thought that has been recognized, is that of the situations and circumstances that were present during my birth, childhood and early adult life of being born to an unwed mother, and the ramifications that accompanied this. It was perceived that during this era, unwed mothers and their children were not looked upon favorably. In this contextual setting, it was observed how some in their community, family, and the church views persons with similar circumstances.

It seems as if the church should be a place that welcomes the disenfranchised, but these people are met with frigid and rigid personalities that may affect these lives presently and possibly into the future. Some of the people in the contextual setting have

deemed unwed mothers and their children to be less than a Christian. Traditionally, they do not address those male figures of the congregation who do not live with any or all of their children. The spotlight of sin resides on the mother and the children.

Reflect on the entire process, it has assisted me on becoming a better pastor and a better person. Going back, helped to better focus on my present and my future. The former resentment that burned continuously has been extinguished by the revelatory information gathered by person within my context, and the reading of numerous experts on this subject. Dr. King said, “If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values—that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.”¹ Looking back has affirmed my notion that wherever there is a void or lacking in your life, God has a way of filling it with divine care, that according to the church’s cliché, “the world didn’t give it, and the world sure enough cant take it away.” Through the research of this ministry model, a new determination has arisen to rise above those who once criticized, and to aid those whose life resembles my former life. W. E. B. Dubois said, “There is in this world no such force as the force of a person determined to rise. The human soul cannot be permanently chained.”² Looking back, I feel that my experiences were life-lessons that were supposed to be used to one day let someone know that they are of worth. One of my heroes, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in a particular speech to a Black audience in Philadelphia in 1967, “Don't allow anybody to

¹Clayborne Carson and Peter H. Holloran, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 255.

²Larry Chang, *Wisdom for the Soul: Five Millennia of Prescriptions for Spiritual Healing* (Washington DC: Gnosophia Publishers, 2006), 563.

make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.”³

The work within my context was met with some resistance, because change is a nasty word in some church settings. To kick off this entire process, I stood in the pulpit and announced that I was seeking all homosexuals, lesbians, prostitutes, drug dealers and addicts, and any woman who had a “baby’s daddy.” I thought that some of the older members were just going to go into cardiac arrest right then and there. Later it was revealed that the only word the congregation heard was “prostitutes. After that, they just went numb. This was done in an effort of introducing the work that was planned by saying that the church should be a place of inclusiveness where all of the mentioned personalities could feel welcomed, and not a place of exclusiveness, where only a select few are allowed and are welcomed.

This project not only introduced me to a plethora of intellect, ancient and modern, through the numerous books and articles, but to a group of highly intelligent people within my context, which by their input helped make this effort a success. As a result a determine resolve has emerged to continue with this team design in building a better ministry. They help select which type of data collection tool would be the most effective, and they also helped in the lesson planning, developing questions for the Q&A, and the interviews. Members of this group served as motivational assistance, because when some of the people became argumentative, they helped me get past those moments.

I really enjoyed the teaching segment, especially when some of the people began thinking in a new light. The classes were where the rubber met the road, because there

³“Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement: What is Your Life's Blueprint,” *Seattle Times*, Publication Date. <http://www.seattletimes.com/special/mlk/words/blueprint.html> (accessed November 26, 2012).

were a few people there who were on a mission to disprove my ideology of a church being inclusive. There was not a night when someone just totally disagreed with what was being offered in the class. As discouraging as it may have been, knowing that there was someone understood and was attentive to what was being taught made the journey worthwhile.

The sermon series with the Q & A's were great. This is always a great tool to use when you want to reiterate a major point during your teaching moments. One remarkable thing occur, from the sermon series; there were visitors, who after hearing the sermons and the announcements about what was going on, thought that it would be a great idea to have something similar to this at their local church.

Lastly, the one on one interviews turned out to be a powerful data tool. The participants really poured out their soul, and you could feel the hurt that they had gone through. Doing this project again, the personal interviews would be first in the process. This may have led to greater participation and we would have been able to hear the plight of more women and their children. The second thing that would be done differently would be to interview older persons who were products of a premarital birth. The last change would be to try to get more male participants involved in the process. These types of changes may be more beneficial to other context that may attempt to perform a project such as this.

In conclusion, this project was beneficial to me, many of the members of the context, and prayerfully those unknown persons who have been left out, excluded, pushed aside, treated wrongfully, or who have experienced any sort of marginalization and abandonment.

APPENDIX A
PRE-TEST SURVEY

**MOVING THE CHURCH FROM EXCLUSIVE TO INCLUSIVE:
EFFECTIVELY REACHING THE VICTIMS OF
MARGINALIZATION AND ABANDONMENT**

The information obtained in this survey will be solely used for the purpose of the partial fulfillment of the United Theological Seminary Doctorate of Ministry studies *only*. All information provided will be totally anonymous and will be discarded at the end of the study.

Background

MALE ☐

FEMALE ☐

MARITAL STATUS:

Single ☐

Married ☐

Divorced ☐

Widow ☐

FAMILY SIZE: (Please Indicate How Many Children You Have)

None ☐

1 To 3 ☐

4 And Over ☐

YOUR AGE:

18 To 30 ☐

31 To 45 ☐

46 To 59 ☐

60 & Older ☐

EDUCATION (Please Indicate Highest Level)

High School (GED) ☐

College ☐

Post Grad ☐

Technical Training ☐

EMPLOYMENT:

Employed ☐

Unemployed ☐

Still In School ☐

Disabled ☐

Retired ☐

QUESTIONNAIRE
Please Circle Your Answer

Do you attend services on a regular bases? YES NO

Do you attend Sunday School and or Bible Study? YES NO

Do you believe that the bible is the sole authoritative guide for the church? YES NO

Do you believe that God is male? YES NO

- Do you believe that God is more favorable towards men? YES NO
- Do you believe that a woman can be a leader in the church? YES NO
- Do you believe that men are superior to women? YES NO
- Do you believe that if a single woman gives birth to a child that she and the child are unacceptable to God? YES NO
- Do you believe that a child born to a single mother is a mistake, bastard, or illegitimate? YES NO
- Do you believe that a woman has value in the church? YES NO
- Do you know of a woman who has ever been overlooked or passed by for a position in the church due to your gender or single-motherhood? YES NO
- Do you believe that the church as a whole accepts single-motherhood? YES NO

Please rate the following statements according to your beliefs. "1" STRONGLY DISAGREE and "5" STRONGLY AGREE.

- Women are of value in the church. 1 2 3 4 5
- Women are accepted in leadership roles in church. 1 2 3 4 5
- Single-mother families are accepted in the church. 1 2 3 4 5
- Women support other women in church 1 2 3 4 5
- Traditional practices in church are stronger than what the bible actually teaches. 1 2 3 4 5
- This church's leadership supports women in this church. 1 2 3 4 5
- Children from single-parented homes are treated the same as children from two-parented homes. 1 2 3 4 5

The church I attend would accept a woman pastor.

1 2 3 4 5

This country will elect a woman as president.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B
STUDY SURVEY

APPENDIX B

STUDY SURVEY FOR DOCTORATE OF MINISTRY DEGREE

Disclosure: No persons *name* or *church affiliation* will be used in this study. This interview will be only used as a method of obtaining data surrounding the topic of marginalization and or abandonment by the church, family, and society of single women with children. **Confidentiality will be held to the highest degree.**

The following questions will be used as a method of correlation.

1. Age of the interviewee _____
2. Number of children _____
3. Denomination _____

Interview Questions:

1. Being a single mother, how do you feel that you viewed by:
 - a. The Church
 - b. Your Family
 - c. Society
2. Have you ever experienced, what you may consider, any form of unfair treatment from your church because you are a single mother?
3. Has your child ever been negatively labeled or treated differently by:
 - a. The Church
 - b. Your Family
 - c. Society (i.e., school)
4. How do you feel that GOD views you and or your child? Does the church that you are affiliated with have the same view?
5. Do you love yourself & your child(ren)?

APPENDIX C
SERMON Q&A

Sermon Q&A's #1

Sermon Title: From Left Out To Right In

Scriptural Text: Galatians 4: 1 - 7 (NRSV)

Date Sermon Preached: April 6th, 2014

Sermon Synopsis:

The Apostle Paul asserts an analogy of the Law being the custodian of God's people's childhood. "We were then treated as mere children, no way our own masters of a worldly religion. But now, through the incarnation and redemption of God's Son, we are made sons in enjoyment of our inheritance; and, what proves our son-ship, God has poured into our hearts the joyous free-hearted Spirit of adoption."¹

QUESTION:

1. Who do you think was the victim in this sermon, and how were they affected by acts of marginalization?

RESPONSES:

Person A: In this sermon, we who are born of the chosen people are the victims.

Person B: We are the victims.

Person C: I am the victim.

Person D: All of those who differ are the victims in this sermon.

QUESTION:

2. How did this sermon impact the way of your thinking?

RESPONSES:

Person A: I now realize how we were considered that, according to the sermon, we were under the elemental spiritual forces of the world, but now we have been redeemed and received.

Person B: I better understand that all of us have been victims of exclusion. We were once left out, but the Lord took us in.

Person C: The sermons shows me that everyone has in one way or another stood in the shoes of marginalization.

Person D: What I think about this sermon is that people, who think that they have always been on track for heaven, were once considered an outcast. This

¹ Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *Galatians* (p. xxi). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

is why I try to treat everyone with respect regardless of what they believe, how they live, or even how they look.

QUESTION:

3. Do you think that gender plays a role in the marginalization treatment in this sermon?

RESPONSES:

Person A: According to the text, gender does not play a role, but the sermon does relate to a child being adopted, indicating an unwanted child.

Person B: Gender does not play a role in this sermon. The sermon teaches that God “accepts the unacceptable.”

Person C: This sermon shows that male and female were at some point outside of the will of God, but God has received us unto Himself through Christ Jesus.

Person D: I’m a firm believer that gender always play a part in most issues, but in this case, the sermon reveals that all were excluded. The pastor does uses examples from different people, including mothers who birth children while they were not married.

QUESTION:

4. If this event was to happen today, how would the church respond?

RESPONSES:

Person A: I would hope that the church would accept all, just as the Lord has done for us, but I believe that most churches would pick and choose who they would want to be a part of them.

Person B: The true church makes room for all, but the local church may not share the same feelings when it comes to welcoming all people.

Person C: I believe that the church would accept and make people a part of them. But you can’t have any and everything in the church then it would not be church.

Person D: The way I see it, the church of today would be very selective in those whom they would want to be a part of them. From my perspective, the church has become to religious and traditional minded, and has somewhat decided who can and cannot be a part of, what they call, their church. I always thought that the church belong to the Lord. Who made some others the owner?

Sermon Q&A's #2

Sermon Title: Love Don't Live Here Anymore

Scriptural Text: Genesis 21: 9 & 10 (NRSV)

Date Sermon Preached: April 13th, 2014

Sermon Synopsis:

This sermon deal with how a slave-girl Hagar was used for the purpose of satisfying her masters, and when mindsets changed, her once appreciated status became void. She now, unfortunately experiences that the cruel behavior of being not wanted and unloved.

QUESTION:

1. Who do you think was the victim in this sermon, and how were they affected by acts of marginalization?

RESPONSES:

Person A: By listening to the sermon, I believe that Hagar and Ishmael shared the role of victims. They were of no more use to Abraham and Sarah, so they were excluded from the family.

Person B: Hagar and Ishmael were the victims in this sermon. Love had moved on, and because of this, they had to move on. Jealousy and greed were the cause of these to be abandoned to the wilderness.

Person C: The slave woman Hagar and her son seemed to have been the victims from this sermon. I can also see Abraham as a possible victim because he had to let go of his son.

Person D: The victims of this sermon were a mother and her child. They were mistreated, excluded, and abandoned. The mother suffered twice, once alone and again with her child.

QUESTION:

2. How did this sermon impact the way of your thinking?

RESPONSES:

Person A: One thing that stuck out with me was when it was mentioned that Abraham was the first deadbeat dad. I have never looked at that from the perspective. It assures me, that if Abraham was not perfect and God accepted him, I know that there is a place for me and others just like me.

Person B: This sermon showed me how negatively single women and their children have been viewed through biblical eyes, which in time has transposed these views into the eyes of some people in church today.

Person C: The apostle Paul declared that with regards to this story that Ishmael was not in align with God's promise. I believe that when people wait on God, they won't endure some of the issues that come before them.

Person D: This sermon has caused me to be more sensitive to the issues of those who resemble me. I'm not alone. I have God on my side and in spite of what others think and say.

QUESTION:

3. Do you think that gender plays a role in the marginalization treatment in this sermon?

RESPONSES:

Person A: Gender played a major role in this event. Abraham was treated with respect while his child and the child's mother had to succumb to cruel and unfair treatment.

Person B: Gender is a factor in this sermon situation. Abraham has always been depicted as a biblical hero. Not too often have I heard sermons reveal how Abraham allowed lust and other acts to affect this spiritual standing.

Person C: I can't really say that gender played a role in this issue, because Ishmael was a male. I do agree that Abraham could have handled the situation a little better.

Person D: Gender is the issue. Hagar was used and because of her gender, there is no mention of any remorse of Abraham or Sarah. Her story reminds me of how the Black female slaves on the plantation were used by the White plantation owner, his male family, friends, and hired help.

QUESTION:

4. If this event was to happen today, how would the church respond?

RESPONSES:

Person A: The church would respond by trying to keep this single mother and her child out of any part of the church. They would accept their money, but not their lives.

Person B: In my opinion, the church would try to avoid any type of relationship with this woman and her child.

Person C: I believe that the church would not kick a mother and her child out of the church. They should try to teach her about how she should conduct herself as a woman of God.

Person D: I know how the church would respond. They would treat you and your child as if you were something or someone less than them. They would not stop you from attending the services, but they would try not to make you or your child a part of different ministries in the church. I know, because I have walked in the shoes of Hagar.

Sermon Q&A's #3

Sermon Title: Acceptance From The Unacceptable

Scriptural Text: John 4: 7-9 & 27 (NRSV)

Date Sermon Preached: April 20th, 2014

Sermon Synopsis:

This sermon deals with a woman of Samaria, who has a negative reputation among her Samaritan peers and the Jews. She has several things working against her. She is a woman, who had had relationships with several men, and she is a Samaritan, which are considered less of a person by the Jews. After a meeting with Jesus at a well, her status is changed by her acceptance of Jesus and His acceptance of her.

QUESTION:

1. Who do you think was the victim in this sermon, and how were they affected by acts of marginalization?

RESPONSES:

Person A: I believe that the victim was the Samaritan woman. She was treated differently because of the type of life style that she was living. Jesus pointed out that the men that she had been involved with were not her husbands. She had been living a promiscuous life. This type of person is not acceptable in her community.

Person B: The sermon pointed out that there were several factors that made the woman a victim of marginalization. She was a Samaritan, a natural enemy of the Jews. Secondly, her relationships with different men, and lastly, she was treated in this manner because she was a woman.

Person C: The woman at the well was the victim. The sermon showed that she was probably a beautiful single woman. Because of her beauty and her available status that there was a spirit of jealousy against her, and that is why she was at the well at an unusual time.

Person D: The woman at the well was the victim of the sermon. She was treated differently because of her unfavorable reputation with the men, which made the other women dislike her. Because of this, no one really wanted to have anything to do with her, except for a few of the men, and this was just for their gratification.

QUESTION:

2. How did this sermon impact the way of your thinking?

RESPONSES:

Person A: I believe that the way that the woman carried herself was wrong, but all of us have done something wrong in our lives. God is a forgiving God, so I believe that this woman is forgivable. A lot of people today judge people on their past rather than their present.

Person B: I have been mistreated because of some mistakes that I have made. God thought enough of me to love me in spite of my past. I am not a Samaritan, but my family is one of those families that were not the popular families in our community. I am a woman, and I know that I have been treated differently because I am a single woman with two children who has never been married. I believe that I am still worthy of the Kingdom of God.

Person C: The sermon has great revelation, but part of the problem was the woman's fault. She put herself in that situation. Women don't have to put themselves in these types of situations. I was taught better, so I did better.

Person D: This sermon brought back memories of my past. I was labeled like this woman because I am single and have dated different men. I do not consider myself to be a bad person. I have respect for myself, but others see it differently. Some of the men that I have dated think that because I have children, that I will just give myself to them whenever they call. Thanks be to God, I've had a well experience, and I will not compromise my children nor myself.

QUESTION:

3. Do you think that gender plays a role in the marginalization treatment in this sermon?

RESPONSES:

Person A: Yes, gender played a major part in this sermon. Men are treated differently in regards to their sexual experiences. A man would have been called a player, while a woman would be called something negative.

Person B: Gender played a big part in this sermon lesson. Gender has always played a part in the church and in the world. The only positive note is that I believe that Jesus is not bias towards genders.

Person C: Gender played a part in the treatment that the woman experienced.

Person D: I understand that we live in a dominant male society, and even the bible that we read is male dominant. So gender plays a part in this sermon, in the church, and in life itself. Women, especially African American women, have been mistreated by male influences.

QUESTION:

4. If this event was to happen today, how would the church respond?

RESPONSES:

Person A: I believe that most people in the church would respond like the Jews and the other Samaritans. Only a few would respond like Jesus.

Person B: This type of woman would not be accepted by the older generation of the church. The younger generation would most likely be more receptive, because this way of life is so prominent in their encounters.

Person C: The church should accept her. I'm not sure if they would.

Person D: This woman would receive some of the same harsh treatments because of her situation. Should would not be accepted in the church because some of those men whom she had been with are probably in the church, and they could not have someone or something their to remind them of their wrong.

Sermon Q&A's #4

Sermon Title: Not Fit To Fit In

Scriptural Text: Mark 5: 25 - 28 (NRSV)

Date Sermon Preached: April 27th, 2014

Sermon Synopsis:

This sermon deals with the plight of the woman who suffered twelve years with a bodily issue of blood. She is excluded from her society, the sacred, and her family. Because of religious and social regulations, she is deemed unfit. Her final attempt for healing, after all other measures have failed is to try Jesus. It is through Jesus that she experiences healing and acceptance.

QUESTION:

1. Who do you think was the victim in this sermon, and how were they affected by acts of marginalization?

RESPONSES:

Person A: The victim in this sermon was the woman with the issue of blood. She was marginalized by religious ceremonial laws. The church considered her unfit, so her community and family followed suit.

Person B: The woman with the issue was the victim. She was victimized because of something that she had no control of. She was disliked by everyone, including her family, friends, and the church for 12 years.

Person C: The woman with the issue was the victim. She was marginalized because of a condition, and not because of a choice that she made.

Person D: The woman with the issue of blood was pointed out to be the victim in this sermon. Her 12-year illness made her unacceptable. The church and family marginalized her, and when she had spent all of her money she was cast into another form of societal marginalization.

QUESTION:

2. How did this sermon impact the way of your thinking?

RESPONSES:

Person A: I could not imagine not being accepted because of an illness. This must be the way that people with HIV/AIDS feel. From listening to the sermon, it appears that even the fact of her being a woman was society disease.

Person B: I can see myself as this woman. Not because of a physical issue, but because I don't feel that my life fits the church definition acceptable.

This woman was not permitted in the church setting, and I feel that if some people had their way, I would not be permitted in the church.

Person C: This sermon showed me that sometimes you can be mistreated because you just different. So like it was with our ancestors, we were mistreated because our skin was different.

Person D: The marginalization that this woman faced shares a unique resemblance to issues that not only women face, but anyone whom the church deems unacceptable. Homosexuals and other groups of unique features and culture are treated less than humane. The sermon indicated a relationship with Jesus after her healing. Jesus called her daughter, which shows that He accepted her.

QUESTION:

3. Do you think that gender plays a role in the marginalization treatment in this sermon?

RESPONSES:

Person A: Yes and no. Yes I believe that the harshness of her treatment was due to her gender, but today, anyone who appears to be different tends to endure unfavorable treatment for society and the local church.

Person B: I do believe that gender played a part because a man could not endure the type of illness that she endured.

Person C: Gender may have had some influence, because the bible speaks about men with leprosy, who were also considered unacceptable.

Person D: Yes, gender played a role in the circumstances of this unfortunate woman. Her issue was a physical matter, not a spiritual or moral matter. If it had been a male with some sort of similar issue, I just believe, that he would have been treated differently.

QUESTION:

4. If this event was to happen today, how would the church respond?

RESPONSES:

Person A: If there was a woman who had an unnamed issue, I believe that the church would respond similarly. The church today wants whole and clean people in the pews. There is a lacking towards caring for those who are dealing with issues, especially those outside of the church family circle.

Person B: I see today's church like the three monkeys; see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil or like the military's motto of don't ask, don't tell. The church should be responsive not avoiding.

Person C: I think that the church of today would reach out to a person with an issue like this. It all depends on what they are going through.

Person D: Because I know most of the leaders in my church, I believe that they would respond just like the people in the biblical story. They would not accept the woman, and they would marginalize her with the use of scripture and church tradition.

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